

# CHINESE LITERATURE

*Monthly*



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## EDITORIAL

As we send this number of *Chinese Literature* to press, autumn with its brilliant skies and sparkling air has already come to Peking. And on the first of October in this season we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the founding of our Republic. Ten years is but a moment in history, but in the life of our nation this has been a period of great splendour. The main targets which we set ourselves in the Second Five-Year Plan ending in 1962 for the production of steel, coal, grain, cotton, metallurgical and power-generating equipment and modern machinery will be nearly reached, attained or surpassed this year. In the countryside, agricultural co-operatives have grown into large-scale people's communes combining industry, agriculture, trade, education and defence, and merging local government with commune management. China is one vast sea of enthusiasm where in every field of endeavour our heroic builders of socialism are confidently advancing from victory to victory.

At the same time in our people's material and cultural life there is steady progress towards new richness and variety; and literature of course is no exception. Our new writing has grown out of the fine traditions of classical Chinese literature, absorbing the best in foreign literature too. It differs, however, from our classics and from some foreign literatures in that our writers describe a new life in which mutual plunder and man's exploitation of man no longer exists and from which prejudice among different nationalities has vanished; for our social system has torn up the root that gives birth to such evils. We hate imperialist wars from the bottom of our heart because we have suffered through them. We love and prize peace, and the men and women now working with might and main to build a life of peace and happiness are the heroes and heroines of our new literature.

Inspired by the noble principles of socialism, convinced that our aim is to serve the people, we believe in a rich variety in literary form, style and themes. Only when many works of different forms, styles and themes compete can there be a great and flowering literature. And since we are a country composed of many different nationalities, only when the literatures of the different nationalities develop together can there be a wealth of fine blossoms in our

garden of letters. As our people's living standards steadily rise, their interest in literature and their requirements increase. In order to gain recognition, our writers must have their roots among the masses; for only by living among them can writers correctly interpret our people's life, thoughts and feelings; only so can they write works which the people will love. The masses themselves are writing too, and have already produced not a few good writers. Among these are peasants, workers, handicraftsmen and veteran revolutionaries who have succeeded in combining powerful realism with quite a high artistic level. The concerted efforts of our writers, whether professional or otherwise, have opened up a promising vista hitherto undreamed of. An excellent example of this is the tens of thousands of new folk songs which have appeared in recent years. It is on this mass basis that our new literature has taken root and is growing.

Ten years is a very short time in the history of literature. Our new literature, like our young People's Republic, is still in its youth; and, as we know, there is more hope and vitality in youth than in any other period of human life. Our literature is a very young literature, but it also brims over with hope and vitality, and in this it is fundamentally different from the decaying literature based on an old social system. It is no simple matter, however, to transform a moribund old society into a socialist society filled in every respect with vitality, creativeness and optimism. Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, our people have passed through a period of bitter struggles. Our literature, basing itself upon old traditions to develop into a new people's literature, has also been passing through a period of learning, experiment and creation. From the works we have published in this journal in the last few years—classical literature as well as writing of the May the Fourth period and the present day—our readers can see the path which it has travelled.

This is a path from the old to the new, from a new birth to fuller growth. In the past decade the stupendous efforts made by our heroic people in different fields of socialist construction have laid a good foundation for the development of our new literature. Now this has grown and is beginning to blossom. These unforgettable ten years, then, not only form an important chapter in our history but a significant period in the progress of our new literature.

CHOU LI-PO

## Great Changes in the Mountain Village

The novel *Great Changes in the Mountain Village*, from which we publish three chapters in the following pages, tells what happened in a southern Chinese village in the winter of 1955 during the Agricultural Co-operative Movement. The story begins with the arrival of the heroine Teng Hsiu-mei, a young government worker in Chingchi Township, Hunan Province, whose job is to help organize agricultural producers' co-operatives. Chen Ta-chun, Sheng Shu-chun, Sheng Ching-ming and Sheng Yu-ting, young farmhands who take part in the great changes, wholeheartedly support the movement. But there are also quite a few peasants who doubt whether the co-operatives will enable them to live better, some to the extent of even opposing them. The excerpt here depicts the doubts and mental conflict of a peasant, Chang Kuei-chiu, nicknamed Autumn Loofah-Gourd, and the story of how he was finally won over.

*The Hurricane*, an earlier novel by the same author, Chou Li-po, (*Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1954) was based on the agrarian reform movement in North China. In spite of the fact that the two novels describe incidents in two different parts of the country and the characters bear different names, *Great Changes in the Mountain Village* can be said to be a sequel to *The Hurricane* in that it deals with subsequent developments in the countryside.

## ON THE HILL

The evening moon was extraordinarily fine, hanging in the middle of the sky; though only half-full it was all the same shedding its soft clear light on man's world. Chingchi Township's hilltops, bamboos and trees, fields and paths, houses, fences and straw stacks were all wrapped as if in an endless veil of pure white gauze or thin silk, looking mysteriously beautiful.

In a little cross-street a dark figure moved up to the front of the raised site of a small tiled house and a dog barked. Another figure came out of the house. When the two came together, they walked down from the raised site, turned into the shadow of the trees on the hillside and along the path where the cool moonlight was playing on the flowers. They walked slowly, the dry leaves rustling under their feet.

Voices sounded occasionally, far off or near at hand, a dog barked a few times and then again there was the accustomed boundless quiet of the mountain village, broken only by the wind.

"You had better go back, I won't see you home," said one of the two, slipping inside his jacket something written handed over by the other. It was the familiar rough, deep voice of Chen Ta-chun, secretary of the Chingchi Township Youth League Branch.

"When can my problem be solved?" came the soft tones of Sheng Shu-chun whom we also know well.

"Very soon. We're going to consider a group of applicants, including you, right away. I think it's ten to one our conclusion will be satisfactory to you." With this the tall and handsome Chen Ta-chun casually waved a hand and made as if to leave.

"Really?" The girl jumped for joy and without any hesitation stepped up close to him. "Then you should congratulate me and walk with me a little. With such a lovely moon, wouldn't it be a pity for you to go home alone?" Having made such a bold demand, she felt her face burning.

"I've made an appointment with Sheng Ching-ming, for some business."

"There's always something; when are you ever free? Wait a minute. I only want to put one question to you. Everyone is talking about us, but in fact," she glanced away as if shy, and then after a moment looked back again and went on: "it's only like this, very ordinary."

He didn't answer. They walked side by side in silence for a stretch. The warm fragrance of the tea-seed flower, the pungent fresh scent of wild herbs, and the strong smell of rotting leaves mingled and came in waves on the mountain wind. She again started to talk:

"Aren't you glad, League Secretary Ta-chun, that I am going to become a member?" At the word "glad" Sheng Shu-chun again felt her face burning and her heart pounding more fiercely. In the moonlight, no one not observing her closely would notice this, but she still kept her head down. After a few more steps, she tried again: "Won't you help me?"

"I'll do my best to help you, but anyone's progress always depends on himself." The tone of Chen Ta-chun's words suggested that official matters should be dealt with officially and had no special feeling in them at all. She felt depressed and thought of going, but tried once more:

"Would you be just as pleased too when other people join the League?" Like every woman who has fallen deeply in love, Sheng Shu-chun was jealous of anyone else, whether man or woman, invading the heart of the object of her affection.

"Just the same. In this matter I can't have different feelings towards any one." Chen Ta-chun had not carefully appraised her feelings, and his words were clumsy.

"Really?" She looked up at him, slackened her pace, and drew herself up to go. She felt deeply hurt by a deliberate slight.

"Yes," he replied casually. Suddenly, looking down, he thought he saw in the moonlight something sparkling in the clear black and white of her large eyes; she was crying. This startled him, and some uncertain feelings came over him. With a deft stroke he quickly changed his tone:

"But. . . ."

"But what?" she asked quickly. His "but" seemed to be like a window admitting a ray of hope and she was very pleased by it.

"Your application gives me special pleasure."

"Why?" she laughed. "Why should my application make you especially pleased? What's special about me? Aren't I just an ordinary girl, like any other girl?" She was intoxicated with this happy questioning and walked ahead with a light step.

"You are not like the others."

"In what way?" she persisted demurely, putting her head on one side. In the moonlight her cheeks looked especially tender.

"Because — will you be cross if I tell you?" His words had become unusually gentle, rather different from his usual mood.

"No, I won't. I certainly won't be cross with you. Go on, Ta-chun," she said affectionately, moving closer to him.

"Because you," he started off, "originally, you were a giggling, rowdy little creature, always playing, backward in your ideas, and not a good worker. . . . I am very frank, aren't you cross? I say 'originally.'"

"Even if you said 'now,' I still wouldn't mind. I'll listen to whatever you say. Why are you looking at me all the time? You are different this evening. I'm different too, I don't know why." She said this meaningfully and in such a low voice that only someone close to her could hear.

Ta-chun said nothing, until they reached the edge of the hill.

"As we're here, we may as well go up the hill. Would you like me to take you somewhere to have a look?"

Sheng Shu-chun of course went with him, but she could not stop her heart pounding. After they got onto the hill, the night got darker and darker; the moonlight filtered through the thick trees, on to the narrow path and the herbage on each side, made a dappled pattern which shimmered in the breeze.

Having been born and bred in a mountain village, Sheng Shu-chun was not afraid of going into the hills at night.

For her, going onto the hill was no more remarkable than visiting the park was for a town girl. But tonight, with Ta-chun, she felt a bit frightened, she didn't know why. She felt a little dizzy and her legs moved lightly as if they weren't under her own control. When they got to a narrow path overgrown with spear-grass her right foot trod on something long and she was so frightened she leaped in the air with an exclamation and bumped against Chen Ta-chun, who supported her and asked what was the matter.

"Trod on a snake," she said, panting, her head leaning sideways on Ta-chun's breast.

"Where would a snake come from in the depths of winter? After the White Dew\* snakes are blind, and now they've all gone into their holes."

"If it wasn't a snake, what was it? Let me see." She bent down to look.

"Let me see it." He bent down too and in the dappled moonlight, he saw something long and twisted. He stretched out his hand to touch it: it was a smooth stick from a tree. He picked it up and laughingly showed it to Shu-chun:

"Here's your snake. Don't you look silly!"

She covered her face with her hands, ashamed, but happy, and couldn't stop laughing. She sat on her heels in the grass at the side of the path, and held her stomach with both hands; she was laughing so much that it hurt, and she still couldn't stop.

"The same old trouble, laughing sickness. What is there to laugh about?" But Ta-chun didn't mind, and he was laughing too. With a great effort she managed to stop, and they continued to find their way up the hill. Getting round to the Chen family's back hill, the two young people stood side by side on a plot from which sweet potatoes had just been lifted and looked over distant hills and nearby woods. Then they made their way to a small path thickly shaded by tall trees. Sheng Shu-chun walked on Chen Ta-chun's left side. She looked at his profile in the moonlight:

\*About September 8.

his dark and healthy face had a shining but far-away and intoxicated look. Taking Ta-chun's arm, Sheng Shu-chun said in a low voice:

"I have something to ask you. May I?"

"Go on."

"Tell me. Suppose there is someone, like me. She, for instance. . . ." She hesitated, as if there was something she couldn't get out.

"She what?"

"Never mind. We won't talk about it. Let's go down, it's chilly up here." Though she had spoken so clearly and obviously, he still didn't understand, or pretended not to understand; once again she felt he was cold towards her.

"If you feel too cold here, I'll take you to a nice place." For some reason Chen Ta-chun didn't want to leave her this evening and he completely forgot about his appointment with Sheng Ching-ming.

"Where are we going?" She followed him.

"There is a brick-kiln in the southern slope, it'll be warm there."

When they got to the southern slope, they saw the smoke from the earthen chimney of the brick-kiln. Near by there was a thatched wood-shed, facing south, with its back to the kiln. They went into the shed and it was very warm. They sat side by side on a bundle of faggots. The moonbeams from the west passed under the low straw eaves and shone directly on them. Shu-chun's face in this clear light looked extraordinarily pale, delicate, beautiful and alluring. Inside this isolated and silent wood-shed, her heart was pounding more than ever. Ta-chun, calm as usual, asked her:

"Didn't you say, you had something important to ask me? Now you can tell me what it is."

His manner was still official, as if he had no personal feelings himself, and no inkling of Sheng Shu-chun's feelings. Actually, he had. On a quiet night like this, one of the most beautiful girls in the township had made clear her intentions, and she was here in front of him, alone,

on the hill, in this small hut full of firewood. No one could see them; there was only the clear and cold moonlight to keep them company. He knew this girl was an object desired by many, in looks and ideas the most outstanding girl in the village. As for himself, to be honest, he liked to see her often, and when he saw her, his feelings became extraordinarily tender, and he always wanted to say a word or two, suitable for her, loving, gentle, and warm. But he was no good at this; as soon as he opened his mouth, his tongue slid on to his production plans; tractors, lorries, small plots becoming large ones, and so forth, all dry and official, without any flowers. Sheng Shu-chun took every opportunity to entangle him; she was always trying to hold him in a net woven by her feminine, half-spoken, gentle and careful thoughts. At this moment, she said casually:

"Do you know, I have a friend who wants to see you?"

"Who? What for?"

"I won't tell you yet who she is. At any rate, it is somebody." She deliberately teased him.

"Who is it, anyway? Has she got something important to see me about?" The responsible Ta-chun was beginning to feel anxious.

"You could call it extremely important, or you could call it unimportant. It depends who you're talking to." She was still being difficult.

"You don't care about worrying people to death?"

"You do official work every day and yet you're still so impatient. Wouldn't it be better if you learned to be a little more dignified and mature?"

"Who is it? Is it a man or woman?"

"I won't tell you her name yet, it's an inexperienced girl, rather like me, but not entirely. She wants to see you," her words still sparkled, "to ask you really, if she. . . ." The girl hesitated and looked down.

"If she what?" Chen Ta-chun observed her manner and guessed part of the truth, but still pretended not to have noticed as he questioned her.

"If she . . ." Shu-chun stopped short before she finally got it out, "really cares for you. Would you like her?"

"What you say is meaningless, how can I answer? I don't even know her name, and I haven't seen her, how can I talk about liking her? It isn't easy for someone to like someone else."

"Then there is already someone in your heart?" she asked anxiously, her heart thumping away.

"No," Ta-chun answered, quietly and precisely.

"Really none? Not one in the village whom you like?"

"No." His reply was still precise, but he seemed to have great difficulty in keeping his calmness.

"Very well, then, let's go." She stood up decidedly, pouting.

"What's the hurry? Let's sit a while longer, there's no wind here." Her decided action made him waver a little.

"It's cold even without any wind, and there's work to do tomorrow. . . ."

"Who hasn't got work to do?"

"It's getting late, the moon's in the west, let's go." She felt hurt and hung her head.

"If you insist, let's go. What I mean is, since we've got here, we may as well sit a bit longer."

"What's the sense in just sitting?"

They both got up, came out of the wood-store, and walked down the hill, one after the other; the moonlight filtering through the trees played on their bodies and faces. Sheng Shu-chun, walking in front, didn't turn her head at all and as her feet felt for the path in the knee-deep spear-grass she was thinking, it must be her home, her mother's former bad reputation, that made him look down upon her. As she reflected, she felt sorry for herself and wept silently. Somehow or other they got down off the top to a thickly wooded slope. Shu-chun was so absorbed in her thoughts that she absent-mindedly trod on a patch of slippery moss, slid, and fell backwards. Ta-chun caught her in his arms and she turned and fell on his breast. The tears on her pale face sparkling in the moonlight startled him, and he hastily asked:

"What's the matter? Why are you crying all of a sudden?"

"I'm not crying, I'm happy." She smiled through her tears, looking more lovable than ever. The interplay of emotion and sudden physical contact caused their relationship to undergo a great qualitative change. His male seriousness and her girlish pride gave way completely in each of them to an involuntary and fiery abandon, an unconditional yielding to the other. He embraced her with all his strength, holding her waist so tightly against his own body that it hurt and she cried out. He felt something thumping violently inside her soft breast against his broad chest. Her arms embraced his neck and brought her burning face closer to his.

After a while, she looked up, and her hands gently stroked his short, rather coarse hair; she said with a smile, rather in the manner of an order from a young girl accustomed to coy behaviour:

"Look at me and tell me honestly, no flattery allowed, do you. . . ." There was a pause and then she bravely asked:

"Do you like me?"

He answered her, but not in words and without a sound. At a moment of this kind words become the most colourless, the dullest and feeblest superfluity. In a rush of wild emotion they were transported by the closest of contacts, melting their souls and stealing away their spirits.

How beautiful it was: on all sides silence stretching to infinity, the fragrance of tea-seed flowers, the mingled fresh scents of the herbage and the aroma of fallen leaves came with the breeze from every side in little gusts and puffs. Their only audience was the moon over the horizon. The breeze ruffled the hair on her forehead, and in the moonlight her face looked pale; she had closed her eyes to enjoy to the full that dreamlike and tremulous joy and ecstasy, at once frightening and gladdening.

For his part he felt only an extreme regret: why had he been so slow in perceiving her fascination and charm, her warmth and the spring in her gentle heart?

They didn't know how much time had passed; they had no watch and wouldn't have looked at one even if they had. Incomparably precious moments are sometimes forgotten. But all of a sudden, they clearly heard a sound in the dense undergrowth near by, and both were startled. Ta-chun held his beloved tightly and whispered soothingly:

"Don't be frightened, Shu-chun. I'm here." Actually, he was tense and sweating himself. He tried his best to stop his heart pounding and listen for the sound. They seemed to hear some movement inside a pile of wood under a matting cover, right in front of them. A rustling sound, which sometimes stopped and then started again, seemed first to be getting nearer and then to be going away till it finally died away altogether.

"Perhaps a wild boar?" asked Shu-chun, shivering slightly, and leaning on Ta-chun's shoulder.

"There are no wild boars on this mountain," he reflected, putting his arm round her waist.

"Could it be a tiger?"

"It couldn't be, and even if it were, there's no need to be frightened: I'm here," he calmly reassured her, though in fact he couldn't be sure that it wasn't a tiger. One year, after a heavy snow-fall, a big tiger had come to this mountain.

With him at her side, Shu-chun really seemed not to be afraid. Hand in hand, they walked unhurriedly down the hill; it was completely dark where they were. When they reached the edge of the hill, that suspicious and peculiar sound from the mat-shed had long ago stopped, and they again felt safe, relaxed, and happy. After that moment of tenseness, Shu-chun felt limp all over and leaned heavily on him. As he supported her along, he looked at her beautiful profile, like lotus-petals.

Walking along the hillside path, just as they were about to reach a turn, they suddenly saw, in a glint of moonlight through a gap in the hills, the flash of a spear-point directed straight at them. A man with his face covered with a blue cloth, blocked the road, and shouted at them:

"Stop, don't move, or you'll lose your dog's lives!"

Sheng Shu-chun screamed and fell down backwards.

## HUNTING FOR THE BULL

When Sheng Shu-chun screamed with fright and fell down backwards, Chen Ta-chun was fortunately walking close behind her. He quickly caught her with his left arm and, in less time than it takes to tell, raised his right arm and snatched hold of the spear, shouting furiously:

"Who is it?"

"Ha, ha, don't lose your head, it is I, you know me well," replied the man, roaring with laughter as he pulled the cloth off his face. "Are you terrified, Sister Shu?" Then he turned to Ta-chun. "And you too, also a little startled? It's all right, now you know, it is I, not some bad fellow, or a counter-revolutionary. I'm sorry, I heard all your love-talk. Good boy, now you have become a son-in-law of our Sheng clan. Honestly this is wonderful news; I really welcome it, and give you my full support."

"Sheng Ching-ming, why do you have to play this kind of a joke?" Ta-chun severely reproved him as he handed back the spear.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry." He repeatedly apologized.

"You overdid it."

"That's enough, don't take offence, I've apologized." Ching-ming said, smiling. "But really it served you right; you are very casual—hiding in the hills and making love when things are so tense in the village."

"Just now, we thought it was a wild boar in the thorns; was that you too? Why do you deliberately frighten people?"

"It isn't fair to say I intended to frighten any one; I happened to run across you, that's all. When I saw you two behaving so vulgarly, I thought, and I still think, look, a respectable Youth League Branch Secretary and Militia Company Commander, usually so proper and moral, is now secretly behaving like this here. Hypocritical respectability and false morality have now had their fox's tail exposed. Do you know, Company Commander, someone has stolen a bull from the village? . . ."

"What? What do you say? Whose bull has been stolen?" asked Chen Ta-chun hurriedly, stepping forward and pushing Shu-chun away a little.

"Why get so excited? If you are really worried, why were you so blissfully absent-minded just now in the wood? You made an appointment with me, but you didn't come and I had to wait. What's the use of getting excited now? The bull's a long way away by now. I was going after it."

"Did you catch it? Did you see it?"

"You listen. Going past there, I heard voices on the hill and wondered whether the thief who'd stolen the bull was here. I slipped quietly up the hill, but when I looked out from under cover of the wood-pile I found it wasn't a bull-thief, but a love-thief."

"Ching-ming," Sheng Shu-chun, both ashamed and cross, did not call him "Brother Ching-ming," "what are you talking about, if you say any more, I'll hit you."

"Tell me quick, whose bull has been stolen?" Ta-chun could think of nothing else.

"I looked and saw you two locked together as if you were going to have a fight," Sheng Ching-ming was still joking. "I thought you were having too easy a time and I should give you a fright so that you would have a taste of tragedy after happiness for having lost your vigilance."

"Whose bull was it? I warn you, you're trying my patience." Ta-chun stamped his foot in exasperation.

"It would have been better if you had been excited then instead of now, and said less of your soft words in the wood-shed: Autumn Loofah-Gourd has driven away his brown bull. Comrade Teng Hsiu-mei from the county office and the two mutual-aid team leaders, Liu Yu-sheng, Hsieh Ching-yuan and even Uncle Yu-ting, they've all gone after the bull."

"Let's go; let's go after it too." The impetuous Chen Ta-chun started to move off.

"They've gone in different directions so as to surround it. I thought there might not be enough people, so I came back to get the militiamen and found you here fortunately.

You're the militia commander, you'd better get them yourself."

"No, you go. I want to go and catch that bastard."

"Very well then, you go over this hilltop and cut off his escape to the south. We'll follow, as soon as I've raised all the men." Sheng Ching-ming immediately went off, but after running a few steps he turned: "If you go empty-handed, you're asking for a thrashing. Autumn Loofah-Gourd is armed; ordinary folk couldn't get near him. Take this thing of mine with you." He handed his spear to Chen Ta-chun and started to joke again. He always liked to crack a few jokes when he'd done his business: it was an old weakness of his. Now he said: "Don't worry about your love affair. I won't broadcast it. Is our elegant young sister good enough for you?"

"Another word and I'll hit you!" Sheng Shu-chun bent down to pick up a stone.

"You should have a few more quiet talks together," Sheng Ching-ming said, laughing as he sheered off. "If you find it too chilly up on the hill, go to our house; my mother is very enlightened and I promise to keep it secret for you."

"Many thanks, I can't accept your kindness." Ta-chun responded in a very proper manner.

"You don't want to keep it secret? All right, I'll broadcast it for you with a gong tomorrow morning."

"You dare, Ching-ming!" Sheng Shu-chun lifted up a stone to threaten him.

"Hurry up!" urged Ta-chun.

Sheng Ching-ming was gone in a flash. Ta-chun shouldered the spear and said to Shu-chun, "You get off home now."

"No. I want to come with you."

"You're joining the hunt too? Stumbling over a stick made you sweat all over; aren't you afraid to go after the bull?"

"I must go. Autumn Loofah-Gourd is only a human being with horizontal eyes and a vertical nose, and he's even shorter than I am. Why should I be afraid of him?"

"He's armed. Most men couldn't get near him, didn't you hear?"

"If you're not afraid, I'm not either."

"You are stubborn. Very well, come along. But you must carry a weapon, you can't go empty-handed. Here, you take this and I'll find something else." He gave her the spear, climbed up the hillside and found a short dry pine branch, as thick as a wine cup. After taking off the twigs and the top it made a short cudgel with a few stubs, quite handy. The two of them ran off holding their weapons towards the southern hilltop; the ecstatic intimacy of a short while before was now completely submerged in the bold and exciting emotions of battle.

After crossing several hilltops, they came to a ditch. On the bank, covered with bracken, they saw a dark shadow. Both vigilantly raised their weapons and approached it quietly.

"Who is it?" The question came sharply but in a low tone from a woman, with something small and dark raised in her hand.

"Is it Comrade Teng?" Sheng Shu-chun ran to her and embraced her.

"Where's the bull, gone away?" Ta-chun asked hastily.

"Don't shout, it can't get away. Even if Autumn Loofah-Gourd could grow wings, he couldn't escape. There are people holding every pass now. How is it you two are together?" Teng Hsiu-mei saw by the light of the moon that Sheng Shu-chun who didn't speak had hung her head and was blushing in embarrassment. She understood everything, and smilingly whispered, "Oh! Congratulations, when shall we be drinking a toast at your wedding?"

"Comrade Teng likes to tease too." Sheng Shu-chun's face was burning.

"Do tell me. Where is the bull?" Ta-chun couldn't think of anything else. Teng Hsiu-mei pointed to the bottom of the slope below the ditch. Following her indication Ta-chun stared into the distance. In the shadow of the hill there seemed to be a few dim figures moving about, and there was the faint sound of the bull cropping grass. Ta-

chun crouched in the ditch against the wet bracken, then raising his head he had a good look, and said to Teng Hsiu-mei:

"I think there's more than one of them; Autumn Loofah-Gourd has got an assistant."

"Who do you think it is?" Teng asked quietly.

"Can't see clearly."

"Whom does he get on well with normally?"

"Oh, could it be Kung Tzu-yuan?"

"Can you be sure it is he?"

"No, I can't." He looked down again. "What are they doing hiding there? Are they going to kill it?"

"Not necessarily. He may be waiting till the moon's set and it's dark everywhere to slip out through the hills and go away; or he may be waiting for someone to come and do a deal. Have you run into Sheng Ching-ming?"

"Yes, we did."

"Why hasn't the fellow come back?"

After a while, there was a sudden sharp whistle from the hill opposite. This was the signal Sheng Ching-ming had agreed with them all for advancing downhill.

Ta-chun and Shu-chun gradually pressed in with the others. Autumn Loofah-Gourd and his assistant retreated, driving the bull to the beginning of the rise at the foot of the western hill. Then suddenly they saw him raise his whip and strike the bull violently several times. This made it angry; it tossed its horns and rushed fiercely at the people in front of it. Sheng Shu-chun screamed with fright and ran back with the others. Ta-chun put her safely behind a thicket, turned round again in a flash, and brandished his stick as he ran at the bull.

"Ta-chun, Ta-chun, come back, come back. That's a fierce beast, you can't play with it," called out Liu Yu-sheng.

"Wang, wang," Sheng Yu-ting had jumped out of the crowd and was quietly coaxing the bull; and now a strange thing happened: the bull, apparently hearing a kind but firm command from someone it knew well, immediately became docile and stood still, looking at Sheng Yu-ting,

who was coming towards it, swishing its tail obediently and fondly.

"Wang, wang," the man coaxed as he went up to it from the left and scratched it under the hind legs. It stuck up its tail, obviously very much at ease.

Why did Autumn Loofah-Gourd's fierce brown bull recognize Sheng Yu-ting, know his voice and obey him? It must be explained that this man was a village eccentric. At home, he called people all names under the sun, but neither people nor cattle were afraid of him, in fact, they felt he was approachable. This bull of Autumn Loofah-Gourd's, for instance, he had used for ploughing; he would brandish the whip in a fearful rage and swear at it continuously; but the whip never descended. And so his "Wang, wang, szu, szu" were heard by the bull as the greetings of a gentle, lovable, and familiar person, which it naturally obeyed happily. Sheng Yu-ting also knew that this bull liked best of all to be gently scratched under his legs; this was the whole secret of his mastery over it. Now he led it by a rope and the fierce creature docilely followed him.

"We didn't know you were so good at this, Brother Flour-Paste," said Hsieh Ching-yuan, grinning; his tone was a little contemptuous. Most people addressed Sheng Yu-ting by his nickname.

"Don't think it's just a dumb animal that can't talk; it is like you too, it understands a little about human nature," retorted Flour-Paste.

While Flour-Paste was getting the bull under control the crowd had surrounded the two lawbreakers. Seeing that they were in strength, Autumn Loofah-Gourd had to stand still. Teng Hsiu-mei had a good look and saw that his accomplice was Fu Chien-keng, so she asked him:

"How is it you've got mixed up with him? What do you think you can get out of him?"

"I know who you've got your eye on." Sheng Ching-ming was afraid to give the name.

"Autumn Loofah-Gourd's younger sister?" burst out Chen Ta-chun.

Scabby Fu saw Sheng Shu-chun, the object of his former affections; there was still a pain in his heart and at the same time he felt very awkward. Sheng Shu-chun had always disliked him and now that she saw him hand-in-glove with Autumn Loofah-Gourd in this mean and thievish plot she despised him more than ever. Both sides were jockeying for position, as if ready for a fight, when Teng Hsiu-mei approached Autumn Loofah-Gourd and asked him in her usual calm tones:

"Where were you driving the bull to in the middle of the night?"

"It's my bull: What's it got to do with you where I take it?" said Autumn Loofah-Gourd, not without pride.

"She's sent here by the County, it's got everything to do with her," interrupted Flour-Paste; then he whispered into Teng Hsiu-mei's ear, "Shall we buy this bull from him?"

"No," replied Teng Hsiu-mei loudly, "give him back the bull." After Autumn Loofah-Gourd had taken the bull over from Flour-Paste, Teng Hsiu-mei quietly warned him:

"Don't ever try to take it out of the village again. Our township is short of animal power, and yet you want to take your bull away!"

"Are you deliberately making trouble?" Flour-Paste added.

"The bull's mine; whether I drive it away or not, and whether I kill it or not, is entirely up to me." His attitude was still unyielding.

"It's your bull; we all admit that, but we ask you to stick to the agreement: nobody's cattle may be bought, sold or slaughtered at will."

"Since when has there been such a rule?" asked Autumn Loofah-Gourd.

"We discussed it the other day, but you wouldn't come," said Teng Hsiu-mei.

"I don't agree to your way of doing things; in a peaceful world, we must be reasonable."

"Who's being unreasonable?" asked Sheng Ching-ming angrily.

"The lot of you," he retorted in exasperation.

"Public horses are ridden by the public; contracts made by us all must be kept by us all. Your bull can't be moved about freely; nor can anyone else's; what's unfair about that?" Teng Hsiu-mei carefully explained to him.

Having heard this, Autumn Loofah-Gourd drove his bull off; it wasn't clear whether he was angry, or what. Sheng Ching-ming didn't feel very happy about things, so he exposed an end of the rope he had hidden under his padded jacket and nudged Teng Hsiu-mei, asking her in a whisper:

"He's a bad lot; shall we tie him up?"

"We mustn't." Whispering back, she firmly rejected his suggestion, strode forward in front of Autumn Loofah-Gourd and walked beside him. Sheng Ching-ming carrying a club followed closely behind them; he was very much afraid there might be trouble. He knew Autumn Loofah-Gourd had learned monkey boxing and knew a few tricks; he was afraid Teng Hsiu-mei might be rather careless and walking close to him suffer for it. He gripped his club and made signs to the militiamen behind to keep close up, just in case. Teng Hsiu-mei however was calm as a veteran and not a bit concerned. She asked Autumn Loofah-Gourd, with a smile:

"Where were you going to take the bull?"

"To a relative of mine, in Tzushan Township."

"What for?"

"To graze there. I haven't any grass, nor any one to look after it."

"Tzushan Township is in the southwest, why were you going northeast?" Sheng Ching-ming's quick mind raised a doubt.

Autumn Loofah-Gourd hesitated:

"It's a very dark night. I mistook the way."

They had left the dark hill-valley and come to a wide open plain bathed in moonlight. The field-paths were very narrow and it was impossible to walk abreast, so Teng Hsiu-mei dropped a few steps behind with the bull in front, Au-

tumn Loofah-Gourd following it, and Teng Hsiu-mei behind him, they walked for a while. In the moonlight Teng Hsiu-mei watched carefully from behind and noticed that his left hand always remained hidden, and if he did lift it occasionally the arm always remained straight, the elbow never bending. She began to be suspicious, and whispered to Sheng Ching-ming with quick presence of mind. The Director of Public Security walked forward, and deliberately brushed past Autumn Loofah-Gourd's left arm. He thought he felt something hard in the latter's padded jacket sleeve, and without warning he suddenly jumped on to the dry field beside the path, and, pointing his club at Autumn Loofah-Gourd's chest, shouted harshly:

"Halt!"

"What's the matter?" Autumn Loofah-Gourd stood still, pretending to be calm, and asked. The bull stopped and then lowered its head to graze on the dry grass at the roadside.

"Ta-chun, he's got something in his sleeve."

"Don't you dare come near me!" Autumn Loofah-Gourd had gone very red in the face. Standing his ground, his fists clenched and arms akimbo, in fighting posture, he defied them. "I'm not a counter-revolutionary. My name's Chang Kuei-chiu, and I don't eat poison, I never do anything illegal, and I've always kept to the rules. . . ."

"You keep too much to the rules. . . ." Chen Ta-chun pressed a step nearer.

With another militiaman, he came up and surrounded Autumn Loofah-Gourd, while two other young militiamen stopped Scabby Fu. Autumn Loofah-Gourd stood firmly with his legs as far apart as possible, hoping to use his hidden strength to throw them all aside. Then he thought: "The true man doesn't act rashly, there are so many of them," and stayed still. Ta-chun went up to him and pulled out a big butcher's knife from his left sleeve. It had been sharpened white on the edge and at the point, and it flashed in the grey light of the dawn. Ta-chun handed it to Sheng Ching-ming and the Director of Public Security grasping the

handle held up the cruel weapon and said to everybody there: "Do you see? What's this he's got?"

The militiamen were roused and one swore at him:

"Bastard, carrying a weapon."

"What sort of a poor peasant are you?" Flour-Paste scolded. "You're like the stone in the privy, hard and stinking. You're a disgrace to poor peasants."

"Why talk to him? Tie him up." Sheng Ching-ming pulled the rope out from his padded jacket, but Teng Hsiu-mei stopped him with a sign of her hand, saying:

"Don't hurry, there's no fear of the tortoise escaping from the buckwheat field; let me question him first." She took over the big butcher's knife, moved forward a pace, and asked with a smile:

"What was this for?"

"To kill you with." Scabby Fu had been searched by a militiaman who found nothing; feeling virtuous and firm of purpose, he was angry and answered for Autumn Loofah-Gourd, his eyes wide open.

"All right, they've confessed of their own accord," said Chen Ta-chun.

"You like to be funny, don't you; is this a time for joking?" Autumn Loofah-Gourd reproached Scabby Fu and then smiled at Teng Hsiu-mei. "Comrade Teng, now that things have gone so far, I'd better not hide anything from you; I meant to kill the bull here."

"Clearly you intended to murder a cadre, but as your scheme's been exposed, you're trying to get off lightly by admitting a minor offence," argued Ta-chun.

"Listen to me," asked Autumn Loofah-Gourd, humbly and quietly.

Chen Ta-chun still wanted to say something, but Teng Hsiu-mei stopped him with a gesture; on every occasion like this, she remained calmer than anyone else, and wanted to hear her opponent's views. "Go on," she said to Autumn Loofah-Gourd.

"If I'd wanted to assassinate any one, why should I have come to this remote corner of the hills, and not somewhere you people often go?"

Teng Hsiu-mei thought this was reasonable, but didn't decide definitely. Autumn Loofah-Gourd went on:

"Besides, why should I have brought the bull? With a horse, you could have said I intended to escape after committing the murder, but what's the use of a bull? It's even slower than a lame man. In any case, as Brother Ting knows, this brown bull of mine is fierce."

"Don't be so long-winded," cut in Chen Ta-chun, "tell us what really was your aim in hiding this knife up your sleeve."

"Haven't I said, to kill the bull?"

"Rubbish, how could just the two of you have managed that?" Ta-chun still didn't believe it.

"We were waiting for someone else."

"Who for? Out with it," Ta-chun pressed him to say.

"He didn't come. So let's leave him out of it," replied Autumn Loofah-Gourd. "I should take the blame, if we've done anything wrong."

"Who was it?" Sheng Ching-ming came nearer and pressed him too.

"Kung Tzu-yuan, he didn't come. Either he didn't dare or he wasn't willing."

Teng Hsiu-mei thought for a moment and made a mental note of the name, but didn't say anything.

"This bull is a good worker, and not hard-mouthed, why should you want to kill it?" Flour-Paste questioned him, while stroking the animal's back; it felt comfortable and stuck up its tail again.

"As it's come to this I'd better confess everything," said Autumn Loofah-Gourd. "I heard that even cattle had to be put into the co-operative and that the price would be low, less for a bull even than the value of its hide. So, I thought, I'd kill the bull, sell its hide and still have several hundred pounds of beef besides."

"Who said the price would be low?" Teng Hsiu-mei asked.

"Someone said so, anyway." Autumn Loofah-Gourd wouldn't say any more.

"Who? Tell us." Ta-chun pressed him.

"Why do you ask that? I, Chang Kuei-chiu, am responsible for my own actions. Never mind who said it, I believed it, and it was I who wanted to kill the bull; I can't drag anyone else in."

"If you really don't want to tell, we won't insist. But why do you believe rumours? Didn't we announce some time ago that whether land, ploughing oxen, or farm tools were put into the co-operative or not was entirely for individual owners to decide; if you don't want to put in your bull, that's all right. Why kill it?" Teng Hsiu-mei explained.

"There are two ways of dealing with ploughing oxen," Liu Yu-sheng explained further, "one is to sell them to the co-operative and the other is to keep them and hire them out; they're still your property, but the co-operative pays you a hiring fee."

"That's a good idea; why didn't I know about it before?"

"If you won't come to meetings, how can you know?" Teng Hsiu-mei reproached him.

"It's my own fault," Autumn Loofah-Gourd gave his forehead a gentle tap. "I'll certainly come to meetings in future, Comrade Teng, though I've been around a bit I'm really still a country bumpkin. I'm not educated, I can't calculate and I haven't much experience."

"Not much experience? You make my flesh creep!" Sheng Ching-ming had a dig at him.

"Comrade Teng, please come and visit me at home, when you've time." Autumn Loofah-Gourd ignored Sheng Ching-ming as he tried to please Teng Hsiu-mei. "My wife's a die-hard, too; I hope you'll come and educate us."

"I can't promise to educate you, but I'll certainly come, when I can." Like every one used to doing mass work, Teng Hsiu-mei would never cut off any contact with the ordinary people.

"Can I go now?" Autumn Loofah-Gourd took the opportunity to ask.

"As you like." Teng Hsiu-mei was quite agreeable.

Autumn Loofah-Gourd and Scabby Fu left the crowd and drove the bull off at a leisurely pace towards their own village.

"Besides Fu Chien-keng, who else does he have dealings with?" Teng Hsiu-mei asked when Autumn Loofah-Gourd had disappeared in the distance.

"Kung Tzu-yuan," replied Sheng Ching-ming.

"Have they always been on close terms?" Teng Hsiu-mei tried to get to the bottom of it.

"No, but recently they've been as thick as thieves."

"What sort of a person is Kung Tzu-yuan really?"

"As poor as can be." Flour-Paste took up the story. "Originally, he was much the same as me."

"And now?"

"Now he is better off than I am. His elder daughter has married a cadre in town."

"Really? How is it I haven't heard about it?" Teng Hsiu-mei was surprised.

"According to some people, the son-in-law is a merchant, not a cadre," explained Sheng Ching-ming.

"Has he applied for membership in the co-operative?"

"No, he'd never apply."

"Why?"

"He's got a bit of spare cash, and he's always talking about moving to live in town. Why should he apply?"

"Where did he get his money?"

"Where else but from his daughter's husband," Flour-Paste butted in.

"Do you know him well?" asked Teng Hsiu-mei, and seeing him nod his head, she went on, "How about going and sounding him out some time, whether he intends to join the co-operative or not: as he's originally a poor peasant, we can't leave him out." Teng Hsiu-mei gave this as the reason, but she also had something else in mind. She had asked Flour-Paste to go, because people would not be on their guard against a man whose head was known to be as muddled as flour paste and so would talk freely and without any set purpose. This calculation of hers took them all in, including Flour-Paste himself, except for the sharp Sheng

Ching-ming. He guessed something of her purpose, and so tried his best to get his distant uncle to undertake the mission, but Flour-Paste shook his head and wouldn't agree to go.

"Why? Are you afraid of having your ears cut off?" Teng Hsiu-mei teased him.

"What I'm afraid of is not knowing how to start talking to him."

"You're a poor peasant, who's stronger than you?"

"He is too and now he's better off than I am."

"Never mind, you go; we're behind you."

On the way back to the village, Teng Hsiu-mei went over Flour-Paste's background, mentioning that the day she first came to Chingchi Township, she'd met him carrying bamboos to sell in town, and that, like someone who'd burned his fingers, he thought only about the present in a selfish way. "Now that the movement's started; how many days is it? he's completely changed. Do you realize, comrades, the logs we burn during our meetings are all got by him?" Then she turned to Sheng Shu-chun. "It looks to me as if you're changing too."

"Yes, she doesn't want to work on her own any more," said Sheng Ching-ming, grinning.

"When did I ever want to work on my own?" asked Shu-chun, who in a moment of dullness had failed to get his meaning.

"If you weren't on your own you must have paired up with someone already?" Sheng Ching-ming roared with laughter, the kind of laughter, only possible for happy and carefree young people whose future is unlimited.

"You're asking for it, Ching-ming. . . ." Sheng Shu-chun gave chase and tried to hit him, but Sheng Yu-ting scolded them, putting on the airs of a family elder.

"You do nothing but quarrel, useless creatures; if someone were to break off a bamboo and thrash you till your skin was bleeding, then you'd know something."

No one listened to him, still less was afraid of him. Sheng Shu-chun caught up with Sheng Ching-ming on a dry field from which buckwheat had just been uprooted; she raised

her small and shapely fist to hit him, but he got away. Everyone burst out laughing as she hit the air; even Chen Ta-chun smiled, rather shamefaced. Only Flour-Paste was still berating them.

"Really, we don't want to be wet blankets, let's walk off quickly and let them enjoy their sweet love-talk in private, to their heart's content." Sheng Ching-ming said this and much more besides while laughing and standing off, ready to run away. Sheng Shu-chun stopped trying to catch him but made faces and tried to abuse him and refute him at the same time.

"You loose-tongued devil, what secrets do we have to talk about?"

"None? Then can a whole night's talk on the hill be made public? If so, please let us hear it."

"Leave him alone, the more attention you pay, the more pleased he'll be with himself," advised Teng Hsiu-mei. "Come, Sister Shu, I've got something private to say to you. Go ahead, you others, we'll follow in a moment." She held Shu-chun's hand tightly, and, falling behind the others and walking side by side with her along the up and down and winding field-paths, said quietly and jokingly to the buxom girl now enmeshed in love's toils:

"Be careful, men are all the same."

Sheng Shu-chun's face crimsoned; she hung her head and didn't say anything.

"Look, how closely united your half of heaven is!" Sheng Ching-ming had deliberately slowed down and waited to tease them. "What are you whispering about? I'm coming to listen too, as an associate student, is that all right? If you don't mind, I'll join your half of heaven, may I?"

"We don't want a scamp like you," responded Sheng Shu-chun.

"Sectarianism!" Sheng Ching-ming laughed.

"And you're just giving people labels." Teng Hsiu-mei quickened her pace, and the cadres and militiamen followed close behind her. By the time they got back to their village by way of the southern hill, the moon had set, and the clear

light of dawn was on the village. Pencils of soft white smoke rose from the chimneys of every house, or hung horizontally in the air.

### THE CHANG FAMILY

When they got back to the Township Government, Chairman Li talked and joked with them for a while in the courtyard before they dispersed one by one. Teng Hsiu-mei, the last to leave, said to Chairman Li who was seeing her off at the gate:

"It's disgusting, certainly, but since it's a new middle peasant, we ought to try to win him over."

"I'm afraid it'll be difficult; I think, we should go slowly with this man," replied the Chairman.

"Still I'll have a try."

Teng Hsiu-mei went back to her lodging, had breakfast, and went out again straight away. Throughout the day she called on every one of Autumn Loofah-Gourd's relatives, neighbours and intimates, except for Scabby Fu, because she had heard that recently this foolish fellow had been reporting to Autumn Loofah-Gourd everything, good or bad, he heard about him. Piecing together the fragments of information she gathered from these people, Teng Hsiu-mei was able to form a pretty complete picture of Autumn Loofah-Gourd—his family background, present condition, temperament, and behaviour over the past years, she saw them all more clearly than before. She knew that he had always been in the habit of currying favour with rich landlords; he had learned how to fight in the hope of acting as a landlord's bully. During the land reform, because he was a poor peasant he had been given an almost new long gown of lambskin, faced with steel grey cotton serge and the same night he had surreptitiously returned it to its original owner.

When the Kuomintang levied conscripts, he had sold himself and gone off as a soldier in the name of a land-

lord's son, but deserted and came back home a few months later. Later he substituted for some one again; he did it three times altogether, so people called him an old soldier or a soldier-monger. "He's really rather pathetic," said one of his neighbours. "In fact he regarded his own life as so worthless that he'd trade it for a few silver dollars."

Having wandered around so long, Autumn Loofah-Gourd naturally wasn't much good as a farmer in the fields, but in subsidiary occupations, keeping fowls, ducks, pigs he had acquired a store of experience since liberation and was really very capable. He had got himself an extremely hard working and thrifty wife from Anhua, and from the day they were married they got up early and went to bed late and ate and clothed themselves very frugally. They kept a big flock of fowls and ducks, there were always two fat pigs in the sty and they had even bought a young brown bull. Their family affairs prospered so much that they had become new upper-middle peasants.

Autumn Loofah-Gourd used to be a sharp and slippery rascal. In the early period of liberation, he received considerable benefits and so didn't complain of the Party and the government. However, as his family economic status changed for the better, his political attitude changed too; when he heard there was going to be a co-operative movement in the village—that oxen would be taken over as co-op property, his emotional conflict increased. And so now he, together with Scabby Fu, had been on the point of killing the bull.

Being a sharp and slippery customer, he didn't feel comfortable about opposing the government's policies nor did he feel it was quite safe. As it happened, Scabby Fu's mind just now was on his sister, so he was always coming over to their house and gladly did whatever Autumn Loofah-Gourd detailed him to do, and so, no matter what business it was, the latter never had to appear personally unless it was absolutely essential.

Having got something to work on after her day-long enquiries, Teng Hsiu-mei went off quietly early next morning to see the person in question.

Autumn Loofah-Gourd's house was also a thatched cottage against a hill, and like other thatched cottages in Ching-chi Township, it had low eaves, narrowing at the ends; the walls were made of bamboo branches woven together and plastered with mud mixed with rice-chaff. The main room, which was also the living room, had no windows, but only a double door, through which all the light came in, so that when it was shut, the room was dark. In front of the door, there was a very small and narrow flat yard, enclosed on three sides by a bamboo fence. In this little yard, Autumn Loofah-Gourd kept forty-odd fowls and ducks and also three large white geese.

When Autumn Loofah-Gourd saw Teng Hsiu-mei coming, he unwillingly got up and opened the fence gate for her; as soon as she came in, the hens flew about and the ducks quacked, making a general commotion. A gander rushed at her with neck outstretched to peck her, and had almost reached her trouser legs before its owner casually took up a broom and drove it away. The bull we already know was in the sun, tethered to the end of the roof, eating grass; when it saw someone had come it raised its head and, still munching, looked at Teng Hsiu-mei with its protruding eyes, as if to say, it knew her; then it lowered its head and went on feeding. Teng Hsiu-mei looked at the bull and then entered the house alongside Autumn Loofah-Gourd, saying with a smile:

"We've met once already, so now we're old acquaintances."

"Yes, we know each other well," he said, for the sake of appearances, as he reluctantly waved her in, but inwardly he cogitated, "Now why has she come to make trouble?"

Teng Hsiu-mei sat at the door on a small bamboo chair and for the moment she didn't say anything about joining the co-operative, but had a good look at everything. At the back of the room there was a bed; a lacquer cupboard, turning black, and between the two a low table for eating; shallow baskets for drying food, and large deep baskets for carrying things were visible in the loft. Any one going up was liable to bump his head on the roof of the so-called

upper storey where two old mosquito nets were hung; obviously these beds belonged to Autumn Loofah-Gourd's sister, who had just divorced her husband, and her small daughter.

"You keep quite a few," Teng Hsiu-mei remarked, looking at the poultry outside.

"Yes, I've made use of every inch of this little yard."

"No difficulty in getting feed for them?"

"Vegetable leaves, mixed with some rice chaff. The chaff's very difficult to get."

"I hear you keep your pigs very well, may I see them?"

"Please."

He led Teng Hsiu-mei into the kitchen. A small rather good-looking young woman was sitting astride a "wooden horse"\* very inexpertly making straw sandals. Teng Hsiu-mei knew, this was Chang Kuei-chen, Autumn Loofah-Gourd's younger sister and Liu Yu-sheng's divorced wife. She kept her head down and her face was flushed; she was clearly unwilling to take any notice of the visitor. So Teng Hsiu-mei didn't greet her but brushed pass and went up to the pigsty. Two fat and healthy-looking pigs were eating. The sty was roomy and the supporting boards had been swept very clean. Two rectangular ventilation holes had been cut in the earth and brick wall on the south side, at present they were pasted over with paper, but Autumn Loofah-Gourd said:

"As soon as it gets warm, I tear off the paper so that the air can get in; it's cooler and there aren't so many mosquitoes; the pigs don't get ill so easily. People need fresh air, and so do pigs; people and animals are alike."

Teng Hsiu-mei nodded approvingly, and smilingly responded:

"When the co-operative is established, we'll ask you to look after the pigs."

"That's all very fine," Autumn Loofah-Gourd thought to himself, "but I haven't promised to join yet."

\*A kind of seat, specially designed to make straw sandals on.

A woman of about thirty, with a scar on her left eyelid, looking very busy, came in the back door, Autumn Loofah-Gourd questioned her sharply:

"No sign of you all this time, where have you been?"

"Watering the vegetables. They were so dry they were nearly dead."

"Please come and look, sister-in-law," called Chang Kuei-chen. "Is this the way to make the loops?"

The woman took Chang Kuei-chen's seat on the "wooden horse" to show her how to make the loops on the sandals.

Going back into the room, Teng Hsiu-mei said to Autumn Loofah-Gourd:

"The man goes around while the women work in your family. It is all very fine, but. . . ."

It seemed to him that she had something else to say, which must be about the co-operative, and Autumn Loofah-Gourd didn't want to hear it; to interrupt her and show his own impatience he pointedly found fault with his wife.

"Make some tea for us, won't you?"

"Don't trouble, I don't want any."

Autumn Loofah-Gourd's wife brought out an earthenware teapot and two bowls and put them on the low table; she pouted as she stole a look at the visitor, and went in again. Teng Hsiu-mei knew very well that she was not welcome here, but she wouldn't go. She never easily gave up what she wanted to do just because of difficulties. She beat about the bush a bit, and finally got on to the subject of the co-operative.

"As I see it, with such a strong labour force in your family when you join the co-operative you will do even better than now."

"I wonder." Autumn Loofah-Gourd lit his bamboo pipe.

"In the co-operative, your fields will be looked after so you won't have to worry about them," she said this deliberately, knowing he wasn't good at farming. "And you can devote yourself entirely to developing side lines. You can keep more poultry and pigs at home; it'll be far better than working on your own, when you have to worry about every single thing yourself."

"Comrade Teng," he blew out a puff of smoke from his pipe, "it isn't that I haven't made the comparison; I joined a mutual-aid team."

"Did you, which one?"

"Liu Yu-sheng's."

"Isn't he your brother-in-law?" She asked purposely.

"Not now, my sister has broken it up."

"Really, why?" she asked, pretending not to know.

"I don't know."

"It was you who asked her to come back here, how can you say, you don't know?" His wife, mending clothes by the door, interrupted, thus showing up his deception, but she kept her voice low so as not to let the person in the kitchen hear her.

"Who asked you to butt in?" he exclaimed at her, also in a low voice.

"I insist on speaking." Her throaty voice, though still kept very low, was angry. "When there isn't enough for us to eat ourselves, you go and bring in an extra mouth to feed. She can't even make straw sandals, only wants an easy time; she believes your nonsense and wants to fly high, to marry some one from the town with money, and be a lady."

"You dare go on!" Autumn Loofah-Gourd knocked his pipe out with a great clatter against the bamboo chair-leg as he threatened her quietly.

"When one party heard she'd been married before, they definitely turned her down, and now she can't go back to the original one, she's like an unfastened carrying pole, collapsed at both ends."

He glared and gnashed his teeth at her, pointing to the kitchen door, but his wife paid no heed.

"Married daughters are like spilt water. Only in your family has a daughter got the face to come back and stay in her family home even after she has a child."

"You bitch, do you want me to beat you?" He stamped his foot and the veins on his forehead stood out. She was his own flesh and blood, and he naturally stood up for her. When his wife saw he was really angry, she slipped

away into the kitchen. Teng Hsiu-mei listened carefully through the bamboo partition, and heard her hit the cat, so that it mewled and she abused it:

"Shameless creature, get out, or I'll kill you."

Teng Hsiu-mei heard Chang Kuei-chen crying quietly in her sorrow, and then it became louder. The enraged Autumn Loofah-Gourd leaped into the kitchen. Teng Hsiu-mei feared something might happen and went in after him. He lifted his bamboo pipe to strike his wife, shouting:

"You she-devil, you creature, you . . . don't run away!"

"Hit me, hit me, go on." When she saw he was grinding his teeth with rage she panicked and flew out through the back door, but as she ran, she went on, "I'll let you hit me, I'll let you hit me."

Outside the door he stopped. If he had really wanted to hit her, he could have caught up with her in a few strides, but he didn't. After all, relative or not, she was the one beside his pillow and moreover, her work was as good as that of a strong man and he couldn't really bring himself to beat her; meanwhile she had fled straight up the hill at the back. When he turned back he saw Teng Hsiu-mei comforting his sister, whose face was all tear-stained. He joined them and said, smiling:

"Young sister, why get upset by her? Don't you know, she is a bad lot, and utterly stupid? Your coming back here hasn't got anything to do with her. Don't be angry, when she gets back, I'll give her another good thrashing." He said "another," as if he had already beaten her once. As Chang Kuei-chen hadn't stopped crying, Teng Hsiu-mei gave him a look, meaning that he should leave them for a while; it was easier for a woman to talk to a woman.

"Sister Chen," when they were alone in the kitchen, Teng Hsiu-mei addressed her affectionately, "don't feel so bad about it, there are always difficulties between sisters-in-law. If you feel it isn't convenient here, would you like me to find a place for you to stay for a few days?"

"No, but I thank you though," Chang Kuei-chen, quite moved by Teng Hsiu-mei's affectionate sympathy and understanding, listened more carefully to what she had to

say, and her heavy heart began to feel a little lighter. She wiped her eyes.

"You haven't been abandoned by any one; it was you who left him." Teng Hsiu-mei said "left," and avoided using the word "divorce," meaning that she hoped, the couple would one day be reunited. Then she whispered earnestly to her, "You know, he's still thinking of you."

Chang Kuei-chen said nothing, and had stopped crying. She was thinking, Liu Yu-sheng's genuineness, honesty, and selfless concern for the public good were all fine qualities, but what use were they to her? What she needed were a man's devotion and attentions, security and comfort in life; he couldn't give her these. This short-sighted man thought of nothing but work, work, day and night, and never gave a thought to his home. With him, she'd have to wear coarse clothes, to toil away ceaselessly, watering the vegetable garden and bringing down firewood from the hill, till her face was burned black by the sun; in the cold mid winter her hands and feet would crack, and at night, they would feel as if they were burning; on the hills, there were heaps of "live peppers"\* and pine-needle insects; the very thought of them made her shiver. No matter how good Liu Yu-sheng's character, she couldn't go back to him. But the immediate question was, where could she go? Her sister-in-law railed at the animals, using wounding words for her benefit; she couldn't stay on for another day. The family in town had sent a message breaking off the negotiations, and there remained only Fu Chien-keng the young bachelor, who came daily to bother her. He wasn't particular about red flowers\*\* or white flowers, and seemed willing to follow her directions. But why did people call him Scabby, such an ugly nickname. As soon as she thought about it, the idea of leaving her child and remarrying, finishing up in such a way, she began to cry again in her distress. Teng Hsiu-mei could not penetrate all her complicated reasoning, and thought, she was simply de-

\*A poisonous insect, looking like the leaf of a tree.

\*\*Red flowers refer to virgins.

pressed by the treatment she had just received, so she tried to sound her out, "You know, new clothes are best, and so are old acquaintances. I think, you'd do better to go back."

"What did you say?" Chang Kuei-chen seemed to have been startled out of a dream.

"I say, Old Liu is a good man and he is still thinking of you."

"Oh!" She put her hands over her face, and cried again. "Please be kind to me, and don't mention his name again."

"He's a really honest man, what's wrong with you? And as the old saying goes, 'one night of married life means affection for a hundred.'"

"But ours was broken long ago."

"Do you blame him?"

"No, nor do I think of him."

Hearing this Teng Hsiu-mei knew that she couldn't reconcile her. Fearing she might prejudice the main question of joining the co-operative, she said:

"You think about it carefully yourself. Nowadays, marriage is a personal matter, you must do as you think best."

Having said this, Teng Hsiu-mei went back into the main room. Autumn Loofah-Gourd had come back after taking the opportunity of feeding the chickens. He asked Teng Hsiu-mei to be seated and, himself sitting down again on the bamboo chair, sighed:

"Ai, all these troubles at home are a real nuisance."

"Tell me about your joining the mutual-aid team," Teng Hsiu-mei reverted to the main subject.

"What's there to tell? I had to suffer in silence that year; I'll never forget it as long as I live."

"What was the trouble?"

"I helped other people, and didn't do enough on my own fields, so I got over half a ton less rice. Don't you think I was badly done? Is that 'mutual aid'?"

"Co-operatives are different from mutual-aid teams."

"They'll be even more difficult to run; too many cooks spoil the broth, many dragons make a drought. I've con-

sulted the horoscope, if it isn't run well people won't even get seed corn back."

"Then, you're not going to join?" Teng Hsiu-mei stood up.

"I'm not saying I won't join," Autumn Loofah-Gourd qualified his words a little, for fear of offending her. "I thought, I'd wait and see for a year or two; also I owe some debts, when I've cleared them up, I'll make fresh arrangements."

"Are you in debt?" Teng Hsiu-mei sat down again. "I'd heard you were putting out loans."

Autumn Loofah-Gourd's face turned red and he did not deny it; but just puffed away at his pipe, his head down. Teng Hsiu-mei knew that though he didn't have much education, his memory and mental arithmetic were better than anyone else's; he remembered every penny he was owed, including capital and interests. She also knew that reckoning accounts was very important to him and figures could move him more than words. Seeing an abacus on the table, she moved up to sit there, and said to Autumn Loofah-Gourd:

"I hear you are very good at calculating in your head, let's have a go, you in your head and I with the beads. Let's reckon up your affairs; how much land did you get in the land reform?"

"One mou per head, five in all."

Autumn Loofah-Gourd's wife had returned with a large bundle of wood on her back which she had collected on the hills. She put it down on the step, wiped the sweat off her face with the corner of her apron, went into the room and got out her sewing basket, and sitting on a low stool on the step, in the sun, began to mend clothes. Now and then she timidly stole a look at her husband. She was afraid of him. In the big drought year, she begged her way right from Anhua to Chingchi Township, and Autumn Loofah-Gourd had taken her in, as his wife. He didn't mind the scar on her left eyelid, but loved her for the way she put up with hardship and was ready to work from dawn to dusk. If she wasn't in the house, making tea, boiling rice, making and mending, or doing all kinds of odd jobs, she

was sure to be outside in the fields, on the vegetable plot, or on the hills, doing rough and heavy work. She was never still for a moment. Just now for instance, she'd fled to the hill to avoid being beaten, but she'd brought back a bundle of dry firewood. Autumn Loofah-Gourd appreciated these good points in her, and he was pleased to see her bringing back such a big bundle of dry wood, but to keep up his male dignity before the guest, and also to please his sister, he shouted roughly at his wife:

"Wretched creature, aren't you going to apologize?"

She put down her mending and went into the kitchen. Teng Hsiu-mei was sitting by the table, facing the door into the kitchen where she could see everything clearly. Chang Kuei-chen, sitting with bent head on the "wooden horse," paid attention only to her sandal-making, and ignored her sister-in-law, who passed over a brimming bowl of hot strong tea from the stove, offering it to her with a smile:

"Sister, drink some tea."

Chang Kuei-chen didn't quite know whether to accept it or not and while she was wondering about this, a head under a peaked cap appeared over the half-gate of the back.

"Open the gate please, sister-in-law," requested the man, smiling.

Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd was very pleased to see him, and, quickly putting the tea down on the cooking range beside the "wooden horse," ran to open the door; the tea steamed on the stove.

"So it's you, Old Fu, I was wondering who it could be. You're a rare guest, we haven't seen you for ages, come in, come in!" Her face expressed a warm welcome to Scabby Fu. She knew, his purpose was to see the sister and she fervently hoped they would fix up quickly, so there would be less burden on the family.

"Sister-in-law-ing me left and right, who's your sister-in-law?" She went on, laughing in spite of herself.

"Aren't you willing to be my sister-in-law?" Fu Chien-keng gave Chang Kuei-chen a look.

"That isn't for me to decide. You have to ask a particular person," Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd also gave the sister a look.

"Ask whom?" Scabby Fu pretended to be stupid.

"Don't you understand? You must ask whoever it is you're thinking about, but I suppose, you daren't."

"Quite right, I daren't; I depend entirely on your help."

"It is easy to help in other matters, but this, I'm afraid, depends entirely on yourself."

The two of them talked back and forth, all for Chang Kuei-chen's benefit, but this small and rather pretty girl didn't lift her head and pretended to be busy making the sandal. The tea on the stove was getting cold and wasn't steaming any more. The woman with a scar tried again:

"You come so many times a day, you've worn down the grass on the path. Unfortunately. . . ."

"Unfortunately what?" asked Scabby Fu.

"Unfortunately, the object of your affections doesn't accept them."

"Who is the object of my affections?" he said deliberately, with a quick glance at Chang Kuei-chen.

"Don't pretend."

"There's no one whom I'm fond of."

"Don't try and fool me. Why do you come here every day?"

"You guess."

"Because," the woman with a scar laughed. "You won't get angry if I say?"

"No."

"Well, then I will. It is for the young sow in my sty."

"That's too harsh. Now, if it's not for Brother Loofah-Gourd's sake, I'll surely pinch you black and blue!"

"You dare! Young devil, you were here early in the morning and here you are again! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"I came to borrow your hatchet. Mine's chipped."

"Why do you use such brute force?"

"I didn't. I was careless, and hit a stone."

"I'll find a hatchet for you, you stay here, but behave yourself." Mrs. Chang hinted, smiling, and as she went out, she also looked at Chang Kuei-chen.

"How can you say such things, sister-in-law. When did I ever behave improperly?"

Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd did not reply, but went into the main room and shut the door behind her. She did not go and look for the hatchet, but went back to her mending, listening carefully at the same time for any movement in the kitchen.

"These five *mou* of mine were not good land originally; I made them fertile." Autumn Loofah-Gourd was still calculating his possession.

"How much rice do you harvest?" Teng Hsiu-mei asked.

"Over four hundred catties a *mou*." He exaggerated the figure a bit to show the advantages of working on one's own.

"How much manure?"

"I haven't calculated."

"No, that isn't the way to make loops, sister." Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd heard Scabby Fu say in the kitchen. "I'll show you how to do it."

She couldn't hear Chang Kuei-chen's reply, and was afraid they might have quarrelled; wanting to see, she put down her mending, went to a corner of the room, found a hatchet and opened the door to the kitchen. Fu Chien-keng was guiding Chang Kuei-chen's hands in making the loops; when he heard the door open, he jumped up and went to the stove to light his pipe; Chang Kuei-chen hung her head, blushing to the neck. Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd knew they must have got on very well, and with a contented smile she put the hatchet on the floor and said to Scabby Fu:

"Here it is, if you chip it, you'll have to get me a new one."

"If it gets chipped, I'll replace it with my chipped one!"

"Well said. If it gets chipped and you don't get me a new one, I'll ask her." Scabby Fu laughed, and Chang Kuei-chen said angrily:

"Sister-in-law, what are you talking about?" And then she rushed out into the vegetable garden. Scabby Fu was going to go after her, but Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd stopped him with a quick look:

"Don't go. She'll only snub you, now she's in a temper. I'll go."

She took up a basket and went out to the vegetable plot.

In the main room Teng Hsiu-mei was clicking away on the abacus, saying to herself:

"Labour and manure together add up to quite a lot of capital, and how much rice was there?" She played with the abacus. "You said four hundred catties a *mou*, four times five are twenty, only twenty hundred catties."

"There's late rice as well."

"With your limited labour-power, how much late rice can you plant?" She went on playing with the abacus.

"Add your late rice, buckwheat. . . ."

"And potatoes in the autumn."

"All together, they couldn't amount to more than two or three hundred catties of rice, could they?"

Autumn Loofah-Gourd was silent, and she went on:

"When you join the co-operative there'll be plenty of labour and you can grow double-season rice on all your five *mou*."

"Two plots are cold-water fields; they can't be planted twice." Not being able to deny the advantages of the co-operative having plenty of labour, he could only argue like this.

"Apart from these two plots, you can get double crops from at least nine-tenths of the rest, I suppose? If you reckon it up how are you better off now? If enough manure were put on, wouldn't the crop be at least doubled?"

"But the extra won't be mine," he found another argument.

"When you work it all yourself, do you keep all your own harvest?" she asked.

"Not in the old society."

"After liberation, when you were on your own, you still had to buy lime and hire temporary labour. . . ."

"Day-labour is really too dear nowadays."

"For instance, if you harvested twenty-two hundred catties of main crop and subsidiary crops, how much would you have spent on labour, lime, and manure?" She looked fixedly at him, waiting for a reply, but he kept his head down, and didn't speak. "Your mental arithmetic is very good; just calculate."

Autumn Loofah-Gourd said nothing. He looked up, and through the open door saw Scabby Fu pacing back and forth restlessly in the kitchen like ants on a hot stove; after a while, he picked up the hatchet, took it over to the whetstone and ground it forcefully with a loud scraping noise.

"Add up all your outgoings," Teng Hsiu-mei worked the abacus, "you get this sum, look." She handed it to him, keeping it level; it showed one bead on one wire, and two on the next, to the right.

"Twelve hundred catties?" he looked at it and asked.

"I'm sorry, this is your capital outlay."

This calculation made Autumn Loofah-Gourd solemn. He thought, if after a whole year's toil, he could get only ten hundred catties or so of grain, in a good year, then to hell with it, he might as well go with the crowd. At this point he relaxed his brow and said, looking at Teng Hsiu-mei:

"The only trouble is, when the co-operative is formed, there'll be many people with different opinions, and things may not run well as the saying goes: 'Too many steersmen will wreck the boat.' If this happens, never mind about not building socialism, we'll all go hungry first."

Teng Hsiu-mei guessed from his tone and attitude that he had been moved a little, and she answered:

"You don't have to worry about that; if things go wrong, we're here to take care of them."

"The hatchet is very sharp, what are you grinding it for?" Hearing these words Scabby Fu turned round and saw Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd coming in the back door,

carrying a basket of cabbages, already washed clean, and Chang Kuei-chen following closely behind her. As soon as she saw Scabby Fu, Chang Kuei-chen blushed, hastened to the "wooden horse" and lowered her head to make sandals. Mrs. Loofah-Gourd pulled Scabby Fu to the corner by the door and whispered:

"There's some hope. I'll sound her out again for you. Stay away a while, and come in a few days' time."

Fu Chien-keng was as pleased as if he'd had a feast. He got up, stuck the hatchet in his girdle and was out of the back door in a flash. Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd ran to the door and called after him:

"Be careful, you rascal, don't chip my axe."

She turned back, emptied the cabbage out onto the kitchen table and began to cut it up into small pieces, mumbling as if to herself:

"I think, it'll do; luckily, he isn't too particular, he is young, strong and honest, and has no family ties, either old or young; the moment you go in the door you'll be your own mistress and run your own household; everything will be for you to arrange as you like; what do you think about it, girl?"

"I don't understand what you mean," said Chang Kuei-chen, though she didn't really feel her sister-in-law's words were impolite.

"You think it over. In any case, we'll never force you," said Teng Hsiu-mei, with a look at Autumn Loofah-Gourd. "It's getting late, and I've still some things to do; I must go." She stood up, put down the abacus, and walked towards the door. Autumn Loofah-Gourd pressed her to stay:

"Have something to eat before you go; the meal will be ready soon."

"No, thank you." She had reached the courtyard; the hens and geese scattered in noisy commotion, and she repeated to Autumn Loofah-Gourd who had come to the bamboo-fence gate to see her off:

"Think it over carefully and let me know tomorrow what you decide."

"All right, I'll give you a definite answer, tomorrow early."

Just after Teng Hsiu-mei had gone out of the front fence door, Scabby Fu slipped through the back door into the kitchen again.

"What, you're back again?" Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd, still cutting the cabbage, lifted her head to ask.

"Lend me your carrying pole, will you, I haven't brought mine along." As he spoke, Scabby Fu took the opportunity to have another look at Chang Kuei-chen.

"It's in the corner by the door, you can take it."

Fu Chien-keng took the carrying pole, and had to leave.

"Old Fu, you still here?" After seeing Teng Hsiu-mei out, Autumn Loofah-Gourd had walked round to the back door to move the firewood. Seeing Scabby Fu, he said to him quietly: "Please go over to the Kungs for me and ask him whether he plans to join the co-operative or not."

Scabby Fu, as if he had received an imperial order, shouldered the carrying pole and hastened off to his hill, where he cut a little wood. Then, sticking the hatchet into his girdle again, he went off to the Kungs. The back door of Kung Tzu-yuan's thatched cottage was exactly opposite his own hill. Scabby Fu crossed the ditch and went in. He found Kung Tzu-yuan at home, and they had a talk. When he was leaving, Kung said to him, taking off his felt hat and tapping off the dust:

"Tell him, he has got to think this out clearly for himself. No one else can decide for him; but, as I see it if he joins he'll lose by it; they won't absolutely trust him. The higher authorities will be bound to find out about that part of his history, and then, once in, when he knows he's lost by it, he won't be able to withdraw."

"Then you mean, he shouldn't join?"

"Not at all; it depends on his own ideas."

"Are you going to join?"

"I'm not sure yet, one way or the other."

At this Fu Chien-keng left and went back to the hill, cut a load of wood and, after carrying it home, hurried back to the Changs with the carrying pole and the hatchet. He

wanted to give Autumn Loofah-Gourd his answer, and he also wanted to see Chang Kuei-chen again.

"I'm returning your hatchet; look, have I chipped it?" Scabby Fu went straight into the Changs' kitchen and said jovially to Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd.

"Even if it were chipped, you'd replace it, wouldn't you?" She didn't look at the hatchet.

Fu Chien-keng looked around and not seeing Chang Kuei-chen, he felt too embarrassed to ask after her, so he went on looking round.

"Who are you looking for with that pair of thief's eyes?" asked Mrs. Autumn Loofah-Gourd when she noticed.

"I? No one, I'm looking for Brother Loofah-Gourd," he contradicted himself.

"He's in the main room."

"Are they both there?"

"No, he's there alone."

Fu Chien-keng was disappointed, but he had to go in. Autumn Loofah-Gourd was cutting tobacco leaves on the chopping-board; he went up to him and reported everything Kung had said.

"Then he doesn't think I should join?"

"He didn't say so definitely." As Scabby Fu replied, his eyes roamed around without seeing any sign of Chang Kuei-chen, so he had to leave.

Next morning, when it was still dark, Autumn Loofah-Gourd was taking the brown bull to the pond for a drink when he saw Teng Hsiu-mei coming towards him, smiling broadly: "You're up early."

"Not really."

"Have you decided?"

Watching the bull drink, he avoided looking at her, and then slowly but firmly replied:

"I thought about it quietly during the night and I think it would be better to wait a while."

"Why have you changed your mind again?" Teng Hsiu-mei's smile vanished.

"I didn't promise you. At the moment, I'm empty-handed; I haven't got any spare cash. Just the share-fund alone would be enough to break me."

"You have a bull, you've got pigs, and flocks of hens and ducks, and you cry about being poor. If you're poor, there aren't any boats on the river."

Autumn Loofah-Gourd himself felt he couldn't really pretend to be poor, so he said:

"Comrade Teng, you are like the clear sky, consider for me, will you? There are so many mouths in the family — and now my sister in addition. I've only got one pair of hands. If I join the co-operative, can I get enough in return to feed the family? You are understanding and most sympathetic, please think it over for me."

"If I am to think for you, I think you would do better to join than not to join. Didn't we make a clear calculation yesterday? You've changed your mind; who have you been listening to?"

"No, I haven't." He denied it, but felt hot in the face and hung his head. Neither he nor Kung Tzu-yuan wanted anyone else to know about their relationship, except for Scabby Fu.

"Once and for all, are you going to join or not?"

"I think," said Autumn Loofah-Gourd, still trying to straddle two horses, "I'd better wait and see a year or two."

"Very well, just as you like, but mind you don't regret it later." Teng Hsiu-mei felt a bit irritated, and turned to go.

Seeing she was annoyed and was really leaving, his mind again wavered: he thought, "According to her, I really won't lose by joining the co-operative." With his ideas turning in this direction again, he smiled broadly, and hastened to call her:

"Comrade Teng, don't go yet, I've got something else to say."

"Go on, then." She turned round and stood there, without approaching him again.

"If I really ought to join, then I'd better join," he said, leading the bull a few steps nearer her.

"If you haven't thought it out thoroughly, and don't really want to join, you mustn't feel obliged to do so."

"How about this: I will return the five *mou* of irrigated land I got to the state."

"It isn't that the state wants your land; we want you to enter it as your share in the agricultural co-operative."

"That's just the same."

"No, it's quite different."

"All right, I'll enter the five *mou*, and keep that bit of hill I opened up myself."

As soon as she heard this, Teng Hsiu-mei understood the way his mind was working; he was still straddling two horses. She fell in with his ideas, and said:

"I think that will be all right. But I hear, you've got many pieces of land; if you keep them all your mind will be in two places at once; in your fields and in your hill land, in the co-operative and at home. You'll be so busy in both you'll never have any time to spare."

"I can arrange things myself; about this bull, if it is put into the co-operative I'm afraid it may not be fed properly."

"If you put it in, you can still look after it; and if you don't want to put it in, you can keep it as your own and hire it out to the co-operative."

"I hear, the prices the co-operative pay are very low."

"It isn't true."

"Come in and have a drink of tea."

"No, I won't disturb you any more," said Teng Hsiu-mei, and left. Her well-proportioned figure, in her grey suit, was soon lost in the wide plain, glittering gold under the early morning sun.

*Translated by Liao Hung-ying  
and Derek Bryan*

LI HSUEH-AO

## Each Time I Print a New Map

Each time I print a new map  
I am swept by a flood of emotion,  
Every part of China's well-nigh ten million square kilometres

Attracts my eyes like a lodestone,  
My heart goes out to every part of the land.

This dot on the map is the steel city Anshan,  
On the eve of liberation a waste, a heap of scrap,  
Which the enemy wanted to wipe off the map  
So that, sighing, we would plant the place with *kaoliang*;  
But we gave as answer to the enemy  
A stream of molten steel, the blast furnaces' roar!

And here, on the once wild, uninhabited Gobi,  
Rows of derricks pierce the sky  
And rich black oil spouts out  
Day and night to keep the wheels of industry turning.

---

Li Hsueh-ao, young poet, is a printer by profession. He has published two collections of poems *Song of a Printer* and *Spring Comes to Peking*.

While I marvel at the oilfields of Yumen,  
There at the foot of towering Mount Kunlun  
Another rich oilfield appears,  
And at this good tidings  
Both my press and I exult.

Look now at this blue thread  
Which winds its way across the heart of China,  
A rainbow of steel has spanned the surging Yangtse  
To let expresses thunder across its waves.

Ah, here is the railway which runs across Sinkiang,  
For years a mere dotted line on paper;  
But today like a column of heated mercury  
It is darting across the map  
To link us with the mighty Soviet Union.

Picked troops everywhere are advancing to conquer Nature,  
Surveyors are waking the fast-slumbering forests,  
Confident that each inch of soil where their feet pass  
Will be born to happiness.

And happiness has indeed sprung from their footprints,  
Iron scaffolding and chimney-stacks rear like forests;  
Yesterday a blank,  
Today this has become an industrial city;  
Once new towns and roads are mapped tomorrow  
Over there another earth-shaking din will be heard. . . .

Dear motherland of mine,  
Were I to use the newest press in the world  
I could not keep pace with your changes swifter than  
lightning,  
Nor could thousands of tons of coloured ink describe  
Your loveliness which so enchants the eye  
Yet is surpassed thousands of times by your inner beauty.

Tell me, motherland,  
Had you days of comparable glory in past history?  
And who erected these new milestones at your feet?  
Who hammered on the gate of socialism for you?

Dear motherland of mine,  
Though I cannot paint your miraculous changes and beauty,  
I know who it is  
Who labours with infinite wisdom  
Day and night to make you more splendid and lovely yet.

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

*Tibetan Girl Woodcut by Li Huan-min→*



## *Pages from History*

TENG HUNG

### On the Road

In June of 1930, disguised as a watch repairer, I was doing secret work for the Party in Chentou, Liuyang County, Hunan Province. At that time, the Party's underground organization was active throughout the northeastern part of the province. Guerrilla bands, led by the Communist Party, roamed the countryside. In some places the peasants rose in spontaneous insurrections. The revolutionary tide in northeast Hunan was rolling along swiftly.

The reactionary garrison stationed in Chentou discovered two sacks of red arm bands which we had intended to issue in an uprising we were planning. They suspected me, and I was arrested. Luckily, they had no proof. But only after I found an influential man to vouch for me financially was I able to escape from the tiger's mouth.

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Teng Hung is now vice-governor of Kiangsi Province. The sketch published here depicts an episode during the Second Revolutionary Civil War in the early thirties.

Because I could no longer operate in Chentou, the Party decided to send me to Liling, a countyseat, about thirty miles away. I arranged to travel with a man named Li, also a watch mender. He was not in the revolutionary movement. We both wore snowy white tunics and trousers of cotton cloth and carried small leather instruments kits, the standard accountrements of our trade.

We set out at daybreak. Before we had gone very far, a peasant joined us. Walking behind us, he shouldered a sack. Evidently he had bought some things in the town and was bringing them home. He stayed with us all the way. When we stopped to rest, he did too. When we began walking again, so did he.

Late in the morning we came to a hamlet called Lime Mouth, a little market centre, consisting of about a dozen shops. This time when we sat down and rested, the peasant with the purchases disappeared. After a while, two other peasants approached us. They asked our names, our occupations and where we were from. Finally, they said politely:

"Our captain would like to have a chat with you."

I recalled hearing that not long before a Red guerrilla group had been formed in Lime Mouth, but I had never had any direct contact with them. The Party organization in northeastern Hunan had given us underground workers certain signs and phrases by which we could recognize one another. Since these people were Red guerrillas, I thought, I could use this means to establish my identity. And so I boldly agreed to go with these two peasants to see their captain. Li, my travelling companion, grew frightened. He stared at me with wide hysterical eyes, his face iron grey.

At the door of a small shack a peasant wearing a red arm band stood guard with a spear. He looked at me and Li, then winked at the two peasants. We went in. The room was quiet. Its sole occupant was a big powerfully built man seated on a chair, his head and chest high. He had bushy brows, large eyes and a tanned ruddy face. Black bristles sprouted on his cheeks. He wore simple blue

cloth tunic and trousers. The moment we entered, he pointed his finger at Li and me, and shouted:

"Who-who-who are you?" He was a stammerer and when he spoke the effort made him blink his eyes rapidly.

I told him our names, where we were born, where we were coming from, where we were going, what we did for a living — the whole story. In the meantime, several other guerrillas emerged from a rear room. All were dressed in regular peasant garb.

"You-you-you're sp-spies!" yelled the big man.

Why in the world did he say that? I wondered. Surely there was nothing suspicious about our costumes?

"We're not spies, captain," I assured him calmly, "we're watch repairers."

"D-d-don't argue! Ye-ye-yesterday we consulted a fortune-teller. He said today-today two spies were coming." Turning to the men beside him, he directed, "T-t-tie them up!"

When I saw that he was serious, I began to argue, at the same time making some of the secret signs. But he didn't respond to any of them. I asked him what were the "five continents" and to name the "four military leaders." He didn't understand this either. I was getting worried. What kind of guerrillas were these, anyhow?

By now they had trussed our hands behind us and, probably because I had been doing all the talking, suspended me from a rafter and started to beat me with a bamboo stick, demanding that I reveal who sent me to spy on them. It was the hottest part of summer, and perspiration ran down my face and streamed from my chin like water. His hands also tied behind him, Li stood off to one side, weeping:

"How awful! How awful! I've an old mother at home, and a wife and kids!"

Furious, I drew strength from the knowledge that the Party would back me up.

"You call yourselves guerrillas?" I shouted. "Who do you take your orders from?"

"We-we-we're Red Army guerrillas! I-I-I give the orders myself!" The savage guerrilla chief roared. He was hopping mad.

"If you're Red Army guerrillas, why didn't you recognize the signals I just gave you? How could you miss them? Now get this straight—I'm a Communist!"

"You-you still dare to pretend!" the guerrilla leader thundered. He pulled out a gleamingly sharp chaff knife and threw it at my feet. "I'm inviting you to the platform!"

That was bandit talk for "I'll cut your head off." I was shocked, but I immediately got hold of myself and said stubbornly:

"I'm not an easy man to kill—I belong to a strong organization. Before you cut any heads off you'd better wait a couple of days; send someone to higher headquarters and check on my story first."

The guerrilla chief opened his mouth to yell at me when a man beside him interposed: "Do you know anybody around here?"

A watch mender called Pan at once flashed into my mind. I had learned my trade from a former apprentice of his. Pan told me that he came from Lime Mouth. I had met him often in Chentou. Now, I mentioned his name.

The guerrillas stopped beating me; they exchanged glances. The chief strode from the room. One by one, the others followed. Li and I were left alone. Beads of sweat ran down my face like little insects. My clothes were soaking wet. A pool of perspiration formed at the ground beneath my feet. I looked at Li. Although I was the one who was hanging from the rafter, he seemed to be suffering worse than me. His face was absolutely colourless.

Before long, some men came in with bowls and chopsticks and three large platters of steaming chicken, fish and pork. They untied us and told us to eat. Li was still weeping; he couldn't swallow a morsel. But I ate a hearty meal. After it was over, the men tied our hands again, though they didn't hang me from the rafter.

A noisy clamour rose outside. We saw a peasant pushing a wheel-barrow laden with sacks that were full and bulging. Many men walked behind him. The barrow halted. A few of the men dumped the sacks into a large wicker hamper—good white rice. Others threw the barrow pusher to the ground and flayed him with bamboo switches that had been whittled to cut deep.

Struggling, the man cried: "Don't hit me, your worship! I'm not the rich despot, I'm only his hired hand!"

"Who told you to work for the rich despot!"

"Who told you to push his wheel-barrow!"

The guerrillas shouted at the man and cursed him.

His family had no land, the man pleaded. He had to take the hired hand's job, or they'd starve. Besides, if he hadn't pushed the barrow, the grain wouldn't have fallen into the hands of the guerrillas!

But none of these explanations were of any avail. They beat him cruelly, then slashed the sacks to ribbons and wrecked the barrow.

Watching this spectacle, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Was this a way for guerrillas to behave? It was just my luck to run into this gang of unreasonable wild men. How was I going to cope with them? I was really in a pickle.

Just then a man came in and introduced himself to us. He said his name was Tang. Smilingly, he apologized:

"We're terribly sorry. It's all a mistake. We've made you suffer needlessly."

He untied our bonds.

I told him who I was and requested him to send a man to the sixteenth district in Liuyang County and verify my identity. He readily agreed. After talking with us a while, he went out, still leaving us in the same room.

Some time later, Pan the watch mender arrived. With a friend around, things ought to go better, I thought. I explained to him what had happened, and repeated my request that the guerrillas send someone to investigate me at higher headquarters.

"Don't worry," Pan urged. "There's been a misunderstanding. No one's going to harm you." He said he was also a member of the guerrillas and that he would help me get matters straightened out.

"Your chief's kind of hot-tempered, isn't he?" I asked.

The watch mender smiled and nodded. "Yes, everyone calls him The Barbarian behind his back." Probably feeling he shouldn't have said this, he at once added solemnly: "But he's a fine fellow — fair, direct, courageous. When he says he's going to do something, he does it. Whether in our guerrilla band or among the peasants, everyone respects him." Pan paused a moment. "If it weren't for that temper of his, he might have become a big officer in the Kuomintang army."

"He served in the Kuomintang army?"

"For many years."

The guerrilla chief had risen from a foot soldier to the rank of company commander. Extremely brave in battle, he had been cited a number of times during the Northern Expedition. Confused by the shift of events, he continued to serve in the Kuomintang army even after Chiang Kai-shek turned traitor to the revolution in 1927. But when he saw how the Kuomintang did nothing but persecute the poor peasants, unable to control his rage, he deserted.

"He's illiterate," Pan continued, "and his family is very poor. After he came home, he tilled the fields himself. He joined the Red guerrillas as an ordinary soldier in April of this year. His unit was scattered in a battle with the enemy. Now he's come back again and formed his own band. We've been in existence less than a month."

Pan said that they had indeed consulted a fortune-teller the day before. The fortune-teller had predicted that two spies would come from Chentou within three days. The guerrilla chief had immediately dispatched a scout to the city. That was the peasant with the sack upon his back who had trailed us for half a day.

Hearing Pan's recital, I felt much relieved. Sixteenth district was only a few dozen miles away. The guerrillas would certainly send someone to check on me. Maybe

they had done so already. As soon as the man came back, we'd probably be able to get away.

But, to my surprise, when the sun was setting behind the hills, the guerrillas again tied our hands and led us out on the end of a rope! Why? Where were they taking us at this hour of the day? If they could savagely beat a hired hand merely for delivering a landlord's grain, would they hesitate to kill someone they suspected of being a spy? I couldn't help feeling tense.

On a level stretch of ground in front of the house about a hundred men were lined up in two rows. They were armed with everything from spears and fowling pieces to big knives and iron rods. Not one of them had a rifle. Although dressed in a variety of garb, each wore a red arm band on his sleeve. In his coarse voice, the chief was stammering some sort of orders. I think he was saying that they all had to observe discipline. He hadn't spoken more than a couple of sentences when he abruptly concluded.

I don't know what got into me, but I suddenly felt that I had to speak out, perhaps because I was angered at the way they had been behaving.

"Can I have your permission to say a few words to the men, captain?"

The guerrilla chief looked at me. "G-g-go ahead," he consented surlily.

I stepped out in front of the ranks. It was as if I was leading the man holding the other end of the rope that bound me, rather than the opposite.

"Comrades, there are a few things I'd like to say to you!" I cried.

A hush fell on the assembled guerrillas. All eyes were upon me. I wanted to take the opportunity to tell them everything I knew about revolutionary principles and the first thing that came into my head was the "three disciplines" of the Red Army. I must have spoken for about an hour. The men listened with rapt attention. No one even coughed.

By the time I finished, it was dusk. The guerrillas marched out of the hamlet, taking Li and me with them. At first, because I was still buoyed up by the enthusiasm of my speech-making, I didn't give much thought to danger. But when we left the hamlet and the guerrillas turned off the main road to a path leading to the mountains, I became worried. The mountain path was narrow and steep, lined by trees on both sides that blocked out most of the yellow light of the dying day. All that could be heard were the footfalls of the hundred men, soft, persistent.

My hair stood on end in spite of myself. I've escaped from the tiger's mouth of the enemy, I thought, only to die at the hands of our guerrillas. It was really ironic!

Crossing a ridge, we came to a hollow containing a small relatively flat clearing. Here, we halted. The guerrilla chief walked up to me.

"Is there anything else y-y-you want to say?" he demanded roughly.

Beads of sweat big as yellow beans sprang out on my forehead. I replied:

"Nothing much. Only that you mustn't announce that you killed me because I was a counter-revolutionary. Also, please notify my father and have him come for my body. But you mustn't harm him. He's a good man. I have a few dollars on me. Please give them to my father."

The chief neither replied nor explained. The guerrillas resumed their march. We halted again outside a ramshackle hut. The chief addressed the men. He said every one should go to sleep early and not make any noise during the night. He also asked whose turn it was to stand guard. . . .

So, they had taken us into the mountains to spend the night, not to kill us. A weight seemed to drop from my chest. It must be because they were militarily weak and didn't dare remain in the hamlet for fear of an enemy encirclement in the dark. But why did they keep us bound? Why not tell us the reason we were going into the mountains instead of terrorizing us like this? Hadn't they



by Ku Ping-hsin

already said they arrested us by mistake? They even apologized. These fellows were a complete mystery to me! I breathed a long sigh that came right from my heart.

Li and I were given a room to sleep in. Our hands were freed. But two men lay on a pallet outside our door, guarding us.

Later—it must have been after midnight—the guerrilla chief and five or six men came in and lit an oil lamp on the table. Every one found seats. They began to question me.

At first they asked things concerning me, personally. But then the talk gradually switched to questions concerning the revolutionary situation, to the activities of the enemy garrison in Chentou. The tone of questions changed, too—the inquisition became a discussion. The guerrilla chief said little. After we had been talking for some time, he suddenly ordered me:

“Y-y-you stay here and do some work!”

He could see that I couldn’t quite understand his meaning. He added:

“D-d-don’t go. J-j-join our guerrillas.”

So that was what he wanted!

“I can’t do that, captain,” I said. “I’ve got a job to do, the job the Party has given me.”

“Then y-y-you’re a spy!” the chief shouted, pointing at me. The others also joined in menacingly.

“How can I work with you? You’re not taking part in the revolution, you’re just running riot!” I was sorry I said it, the moment the words were out of my mouth, for I was sure the hot-tempered chief would be furious.

But he wasn’t. He only asked in surprise: “Wh-wh-what do you mean—r-r-running riot?”

Starting with their beating of the hired hand, I pointed out many errors they had committed. I explained Communist Party policy to them, and told them how they ought to act in the future.

Wide-eyed, the guerrilla leader listened in silence. The others exchanged glances which seemed to say: So that’s how it is!

I paused, and the chief immediately stated: “We’ll do it your way. Y-y-you be our political commissar.”

“Me? Political commissar?”

“Yes.”

I hastily shook my head. “I can’t, I haven’t got the ability.”

“Y-you’re a Communist.” His voice grew unexpectedly soft. He seemed to be trying to placate me.

“If you want a commissar, why don’t you ask the Party to send you one?”

He looked rather embarrassed. “W-w-we’re an independent outfit.”

At last I understood. They weren’t Red guerrillas led by the Communist Party. They had organized themselves and were operating alone.

“No wonder you’re still superstitious, go to fortune-tellers.”

“What’s wrong with fortune-tellers? S-s-some of the most famous strategists in history consulted them!”

I had to laugh. “If I become your commissar, you’ll have to listen to me.”

“W-w-we will,” the guerrilla leader promised earnestly.

I had hated that fellow from the time the guerrillas had seized me, because he had been so pig-headed and his men had tormented me all day for no reason whatever. Now, I suddenly discovered how likable he was. It seemed to me that people like him and his men were the grass-roots of the revolution. They ought to be won over. As long as I had run into them, it was my duty to bring them under the flag of the Party, especially since they themselves were pleading for Party leadership.

“All right,” I said. “I’ll stay.”

For the first time I saw the bushy-browed large-eyed guerrilla chief look happy. He grinned like a pleased child.

The next day, I made contact with the Party. The guerrilla band was taken under the wing of the sixteenth district of Liuyang County. The chief remained in command as captain. I was appointed political commissar. In July

of that year, the guerrilla unit was reorganized into the Sixteenth Regiment of the Red Guards. I became head quartermaster. The chief rose to the rank of vice-regimental commander.

He was extremely loyal to the Party and performed his duties faithfully. The organization took special pains with his education. Not long after he officially joined the revolution, on my sponsorship he was admitted to membership in the Communist Party of China.

That winter a group of recruits he was leading was attacked by the enemy while on the way to reinforce one of the main Red Army forces. He fought courageously but, unfortunately, he was killed in battle.

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro*



CHU CHIA-SHENG

## The Flickering Camp Fires

Darkness had fallen over the far-stretching grasslands: hills, bushes and marshes were swallowed up in the gloom. The sprinkling of stars looked faint and far away. The night wind was wailing and by fits and starts from somewhere in the vicinity we heard the eerie howling of wolves.

We were four days' march from Ahpa. The few of us were badly blistered where our straw sandals had chafed feet already festering from immersion in brackish water. At each step, we oozed pus and blood. It was many hours since our last meal of wild herbs and we were utterly spent. Fallen behind the main force, we were clinging together, urging each other forward.

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Chu Chia-sheng, a veteran Red Army man who took part in the Long March in 1934, is now working in Sinkiang. The reminiscence published here is based on his personal experience during the historical march of the Chinese Red Army on their way to North China.

At last we struggled up a hummock and saw a hollow not far ahead dotted with camp fires like some evening fair. Above the red fires leaped flickering brilliant flames which higher up turned blue before merging in the darkness to be lost in the night. In a flash I felt well-fed and sound of limb—gone was all my fatigue. We who had been like the maimed leading the blind were transformed into strong men, each marching unaided towards the fires.

"We've made it!" cried someone eagerly. "There's our detachment."

"What d'you suppose they're doing now?" I asked.

One man limping along with a stick answered solemnly:

"Doing now? They've had a good square meal and are all set for a sound sleep. They've kept two pails of rice for us, leaving them by the fire to keep hot so that the moment we get there we can tuck in."

Instead of contradicting this patent untruth, we all accepted it. It was too dark to see the others' expressions, but I know a smile crossed my face and my heart glowed. I could just imagine it: two big tubs of real rice, piping hot, giving off a good, appetizing smell. . . .

We went up to one of the fires. It was the largest, the wood on it was crackling, its flames flickered in the air like scarlet silk, and the fierce heat carried sparks high up into the night sky.

Men were crowded round this fire, sitting, lying down, back to back, resting their heads on a friend's shoulder or knee. Instead of chatting on this and that as usual, they might have been holding their breath, so quiet were they now.

"... That old traitor Tseng Kuo-fan, determined to take Nanking and destroy the Taipings,\* led an army, hundreds of thousands strong, from Hunan. Then Li Hsiu-cheng, one of the finest Taiping generals, with a few tens of thousands of men put up a fierce resistance for over forty days near Nanking. In the end, though, the enemy sur-

\*The Taiping Revolution (1851-1864) was one of the biggest agrarian revolutions in China.

rounded Nanking, its communications were cut and Li Hsiu-cheng couldn't hold out. The city was in terrible danger.

...

A man with a crisp Hunan accent was telling this story.

Skirting some of the seated men, by the light of the fire, I looked at the story-teller sitting cross-legged on a small piece of oxhide, dressed in shabby old blue cotton. His gaunt face was heavily bearded, and he had his army cap in his hands. His unkempt hair was matted like a tussock of grass. I squatted slowly down and nudged my neighbour:

"Comrade, who's that?"

The fellow stared at me. "Our chief."

I said no more but listened.

"The enemy tied Nanking up so tight not a drop of water could get through. Soon the grain in the city was finished. But in face of all these difficulties, Li Hsiu-cheng led his men to battle to the death. They ate bark, they ate roots. When these were finished they cooked oxhides to stave off starvation. But at last the enemy broke into Nanking and Li Hsiu-cheng was killed by Tseng Kuo-fan."

Someone asked gruffly: "Weren't they finished then?"

"Not they!" The story-teller raised his voice. "The people will always remember Li Hsiu-cheng. They used to sing a folk song in those days:

Bamboo shoots' two ends are yellow,

Li Hsiu-cheng is the peasants' leader.

The landlords dread him like the King of Hell,

The peasants love him like a mother.

Besides, the seeds of the Taiping Revolution were sown all up and down the Yangtse Valley, growing up to help the Nien army\* and other revolutionaries in the fight against the ruling class. Men like that can't be finished—aren't we carrying on the work they started?"

The fire blazed higher, as if to burn up the shades of night and change darkness into day.

\*The Nien army fought the Ching government for some years in North China after the Taipings were crushed.

The men round the fire were pale and haggard, not having had a decent meal for days, in addition, they had been constantly on the march and engaged in frequent skirmishes with the enemy intercepting or pursuing us, till they were exhausted. But what a change was here! Spirits rose a hundred fold, every face in the light of the fire was ruddy and shining. I, for one, forgot all our troubles. Hunger? Exhaustion? These had never worried me, surely.

That night I fell into a fitful sleep and dreamed I saw Li Hsiu-cheng in his battle dress beside a blazing camp fire, roasting oxhide with his starving men. The hide, crisp and brown, looked very appetizing!

A burning spark fell on my foot and woke me. A good many people were still awake. Some were busy cooking, one was prodding the fire with a stick. I crawled over and smelt musty leather. So they'd decided to copy the Taiping heroes and cook some oxhide for us.

The man poking the fire with a stick heard me approach. He turned and said with a grin:

"Secretary Chu, is it? I'm roasting oxhide. I didn't call you just now because you were sleeping. I meant to wait till this was ready."

"My sandal thongs are leather: you can have them too."

"There's no hurry. I've much more than you! Keep yours for next time."

The leather hissed as it burned and grease bubbled out in countless tiny beads. As these fell into the fire dense flames leaped up.

When the hide was cooked he gave me my share: a piece two fingers wide and two inches long. Holding it in my hand I looked at it curiously. It was charred a rich, dark brown. I bit off a morsel and it tasted good! It was like eating a cake fried in deep fat.

Two days later my feet were in such bad shape that I could hardly hobble along. Many of the others were the same. Owing to disease and hunger—all our leather was gone—more and more men were falling out of the ranks. But whenever we thought of that night and the chief's

story about the Taiping rebels, it put fresh heart into us. Arm in arm, or with sticks, we struggled on.

Oddly enough, the same thing happened again that night. It was equally black and stars were winking in the distance. The night wind wailed and far away rose the eerie howls of wolves. Hard as we drove ourselves, we could barely put one foot in front of the other, and after hours of exertion we still seemed to be on the same spot. I remembered my sandals suddenly and cried: "Find some firewood, comrades, and we'll roast some leather!"

"Leather? There's none left."

"I've still some leather sandal thongs."

That gave them new life and they groped in the dark for fuel. Some were in favour of roasting, others of boiling. The latter reasoned that though boiled leather tastes disgusting, the fact that it is difficult to digest makes it stave off hunger longer. This most powerful argument convinced us all. We fetched a pot of water from a nearby ditch and started our cooking.

When the leather was ready, each man's share was a fragment no larger than a finger-nail. It was nothing like as good as roasted leather! We were hardly able to chew or swallow it. For the sake of the revolution we forced it down!

Then—either for psychological reasons or as a result of eating that scrap of leather—we actually stopped feeling so ravenous and found strength enough to plod on.

We trudged on and on till suddenly in front we saw camp fires again, just as we had seen them that night from the hummock: above the red fires leaped flickering brilliant flames which higher up turned blue before merging in the darkness to be lost in the night. . . .

"Comrades, down there by the fire the chief's telling more about the Taipings!" someone shouted. "Hurry!"

"Right!" I cried. "If we're late we'll miss it."

Once more hunger and pain were forgotten as we headed for the camp fires.

*Translated by Gladys Yang  
Illustration by Ku Ping-hsin*

SUN LI

## Lotus Creek

It was a summer night in the year 1940. The moon had risen and the little courtyard was delightfully fresh and clean. The rushes split during the day were damp and supple, just waiting to be woven into mats. A woman was sitting in the yard plaiting the long soft rushes with nimble fingers. The thin, fine strands leaped and twisted in her arms.

Paiyangtien lies in the middle of the province of Hopei and is known all over China for its reeds and rushes. I can't tell you the exact area grown with them nor the yearly output. All I know is that each year when the rush flowers blow in the breeze and the leaves turn yellow, the whole crop is cut and stacked in the squares round Paiyangtien like a Great Wall of reeds. The women plait mats in their threshing-fields or courtyards, vast quantities of silvery, snow-white mats. And in June, when the water in the creek is high, countless boats ship them away, until soon towns and villages in all parts of the country have these finely woven mats with their lovely designs.

"Paiyangtien mats are best," is quite an axiom.

The young woman in the yard was plaiting a mat, seated on the long stretch of it already accomplished where she

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Sun Li is a writer of short stories and the author of the well-known novel *A Preliminary Chronicle of Stormy Days* dealing with the peasants' struggle against Japanese invaders in the area where the incident of the present sketch took place.

seemed enthroned on virgin snow or on a fleecy cloud. From time to time she strained her eyes towards the creek, another world of silver white. Light, translucent mist had risen over the water, and the breeze was laden with the scent of fresh lotus leaves.

The gate was still open—her husband wasn't home yet.

It was very late before her husband came home. He wasn't more than twenty, a barefoot young fellow in a large straw hat, a spotless white shirt and black trousers rolled up over his knees. His name was Shui-sheng and he was chief of the anti-Japanese guerrillas in Lesser Reed Village, as well as the leader of the Communist Party branch there. Today he had taken his men to the district town for a meeting. His wife looked up with a smile as he came in.

"What kept you so long today?"

She stood up to fetch him some food. Shui-sheng sat on the steps.

"Never mind about that—I've eaten."

She sat down on the mat again. Her husband's face was rather flushed and he seemed out of breath.

"Where are the others?" she asked.

"Still in town. How's dad?"

"Asleep."

"And Hsiao-hua?"

"He was out half the day with his grandad shrimping and went to bed hours ago. Why haven't the others come back?"

Shui-sheng gave a forced laugh.

"What's wrong with you?"

"I'm joining the army tomorrow," he said softly.

His wife's hand twitched as if a reed had cut it, and she started sucking one finger.

"The district committee called this meeting today. Very soon now, they say, the Japs are going to try to set up more bases. If they manage to get a base at Tungkou—which is only a few dozen li away—that will alter our position here completely. The meeting decided to form a

district brigade to keep the Japs out. I was the first to volunteer to go."

His wife lowered her head and muttered:

"Always a step ahead of the others, aren't you?"

"I'm chief of our village guerrillas and one of the cadres: of course I have to take the lead. The others volunteered too. They didn't dare come home, though, for fear their folk would try to hold them back. They chose me to come back and explain things for them to their families. Every one felt you had more sense than most wives."

His wife digested this in silence.

"I won't try to stop you," she said presently. "But what about us?"

Shui-sheng pointed to his father's room and told her to keep her voice down.

"You'll be taken care of, naturally. But our village is small and seven fellows are joining the army this time. That doesn't leave many young men at home. We can't look to others for everything: the main burden will fall on you. Dad's old and Hsiao-hua's no use."

His wife felt a lump in her throat but held back the tears.

"So long as you know what we're up against, that's all."

Shui-sheng wanted to comfort her but time was short. He still had many things to do before leaving.

"You shoulder the load while I'm away. When we've driven the Japs out and I come home, I'll make it up to you."

With this, Shui-sheng set off for some neighbours' houses, promising to come back and explain matters to his father.

He didn't come back till cock-crow. His wife was still sitting like a statue in the yard, waiting.

"What instructions have you got for me?" she asked.

"Nothing really. Mind you go on making progress while I'm away. Work hard and learn to read and write."

"Uh-huh."

"Don't fall behind the others."

"Uh-huh. What else?"

"Don't let the Japs or traitors take you alive. If you're caught, fight to the finish." This was the main thing he had to say, and his wife assented in tears.

When day broke she made a little bundle of a new cotton suit, a new towel, a new pair of cloth shoes. The other wives had similar bundles for Shui-sheng to take. The whole family saw him off. His father, holding Hsiao-hua's hand, said:

"You're doing the right thing, Shui-sheng, so I won't stop you. Go with an easy mind. I'll look after your wife and boy for you, don't worry."

The whole village, men and women, young and old turned out to see him off. Shui-sheng grinned at them all, stepped into a boat and rowed off.

But there must be something of the clinging vine about women. Two days after Shui-sheng left, four young wives gathered in his house to talk things over.

"Apparently they're still here: they haven't gone yet. I don't want to be a drag, but there's a jacket I forgot to give him."

"I've something important to say to him."

Shui-sheng's wife said:

"I heard that the Japs want to set up a base at Tungkou."

"There's not a chance of our running into them, not if we pay a flying visit."

"I didn't mean to go, but my mother-in-law insists that I ought to see him. What for, I'd like to know?"

Without breathing a word to any one, the four of them took a small boat and paddled to Ma Village across the river.

They dared not look for their husbands openly there but went to a relative's house at one end of the village.

"You've just missed them," they were told. "They were still here yesterday evening but left some time in the night. No one knows where they've gone. You've no call to worry, though. I hear Shui-sheng was made a vice-platoon leader straight off: they're all in tremendous spirits."

Shame-faced and blushing, the women took their leave and rowed off again. It was nearly noon, without a cloud in the sky, but on the river was a breeze from the paddy fields and rushes in the south. Theirs was the only boat afloat on this endless expanse of water like rippling quick-silver.

Disappointed and rather upset, each woman was secretly laying the blame on her heartless brute of a husband. But young people are incurably optimistic and women have a special knack of forgetting their troubles. Very soon they were laughing and chattering again.

"So they just up and left!"

"I'm sure they're having the time of their lives. This means more to them than New Year or getting married."

"They're like wild horses: they won't stay tied up in a stable."

"No, they all break away."

"Take it from me, that man of mine hasn't given one thought to his home since he joined the army."

"That's true. Some young soldiers once stayed in our house. Singing from dawn to dusk they were: we've never larked like that! I was fool enough to think that once they had nothing to do, they'd start looking glum. But what do you suppose? They painted a whole set of white circles on our courtyard wall, and squatted down one by one for target practice, still singing all the time!"

They paddled easily along while water gurgled on each side of the boat. One of them scooped up a water chestnut, still tiny and milky white. She threw it back into the river. The water chestnut floated placidly there, where it would grow.

"I wonder where they've gone."

"He can go to the end of the earth for all I care!"

"Look! A boat!"

They all raised their heads and gazed into the distance.

"Why, they're Japanese soldiers—see that uniform!"

"Quick!"

They rowed on for dear life. One started wishing they had never taken such a risk, another blaming the husbands

who had deserted them. But in no time they put these thoughts out of their heads. They must row fast—the larger boat was coming after them.

The Japanese were going as swiftly as they could.

It was lucky that all these young wives had grown up by the river: their boat went like the wind. It shot forward like some flying fish, hardly skimming the water. They had been in and out of boats since they were children, and could paddle as fast as they could spin or sew.

If the enemy overtook them, they would drown themselves in the river.

The large boat was making quick headway. No doubt about it, those were Japanese. The young women clenched their teeth and fought down their panic. They did not let their hands tremble. The oars plashed loudly, steadily through the water.

"Head for Lotus Creek! It's too shallow for a boat that size."

They raced for the creek, a good many *mou* in extent, where as far as eye could see massed lotus leaves reached towards the genial sun like a solid wall of bronze. Their pink buds, thrust up like arrows, seemed sentinels watching over Paiyangtien.

They rowed for the creek and with one final effort drove their small craft in among the lotus. Some wild ducks flapped their wings and flew off with shrill cries, whirring low over the water. A volley of shots rang out!

Pandemonium broke loose. Sure that they had fallen into an enemy ambush with no hope of escape, they jumped all together into the water. But presently, realizing that all the shots were aimed towards the river, they caught hold of the boat's side and peered cautiously out. Not far away under a broad lotus leaf they saw a man's head—the rest of him was submerged. It was Shui-sheng. Looking right and left, each soon discovered her husband—so this was where they were!

But the men under the lotus leaves were too busy aiming at the enemy to so much as glance at their wives. Quick



by Ku Ping-hsin

shots rang out, and after four or five volleys they threw hand-grenades and rushed forward.

The grenades sank the enemy boat with everything on board, leaving nothing but smoke and fumes of saltpetre on the surface. With shouts and laughter, the men started salvaging trophies. They dived as if they were after fish. They raced to retrieve enemy rifles, cartridge belts, and sack after sack of dripping flour and rice. Shui-sheng swam with a great splashing after a carton of biscuits bobbing on the waves.

Soaked to the skin, the wives climbed back into their boat.

Holding the biscuits high in one hand and paddling hard with the other, Shui-sheng shouted towards them:

"Come out of that, you!"

He was furiously angry.

They rowed out—what else could they do? Without warning a man popped up from under their bows, and Shui-sheng's wife was the only one to recognize him. It was the captain of the district brigade. Wiping the water from his eyes, he demanded:

"What are you doing here?"

Shui-sheng's wife answered:

"We were taking them some more clothes."

The captain turned to Shui-sheng:

"Are they all from your village?"

"That's right. A bunch of backward elements!" He hurled the biscuits into their boat and disappeared with a splash, reappearing some distance away.

The captain laughed.

"Well, your trip wasn't wasted. If not for you, our ambush wouldn't have been so successful. But now you've completed your mission, you'd better hurry home and dry your clothes. The situation is still pretty serious."

By now the men had loaded all their trophies on their boats and were ready to move on. Each of them had plastered a large lotus leaf on his head to keep off the midday sun. The women rescued their bundles which had fallen into the water and threw them over. Then the men's three boats made off quickly towards the southeast, to be swallowed up soon in the heat haze over the river.

The women lost no time in starting back, bedraggled as drowned rats. But all the excitement they had been through soon set them laughing and chattering again. The one in the stern made a face over her shoulder.

"Did you ever see the like? Just couldn't be bothered with us!"

"As if we'd lost face for them!"

They laughed, knowing that they hadn't exactly covered themselves with glory. Still:

"We haven't got rifles. If we had, we could take on the Japs without hiding in the creek."

"Well, so at last I've seen fighting! What's so wonderful about it? As long as you don't lose your head, anybody can squat there and let off a gun."

"When a boat sinks I can dive to collect stuff too. I promise you I'm a better swimmer than they are—I can go down deeper than that."

"Let's set up a unit when we go back, or we'll never be able to leave the village again."

"Looking down on us the moment they join the army!  
In another two years they won't think us worth talking  
to; but are they all that much better?"

That autumn they learned to fire rifles. When winter  
came and the time to catch fish in the ice, they took it in  
turn to take out the sleigh and whizz back and forth over  
the ice, patrolling the village. When the enemy attempted  
to "mop up" the marshlands, they worked hand in glove  
with the army, slipping fearlessly in and out of the sea of  
reeds.

1945

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

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In the state of Chu lived a man who sold shields and  
spears.

"My shields are so strong," he boasted, "that  
nothing can pierce them. My spears are so sharp there  
is nothing they cannot pierce."

"What if one of your spears strikes one of your  
shields?" someone asked him.

The man had no answer to that.

**Han Fei Tzu**  
(3rd century B.C. philosopher)



CHU JEN

### Spring Comes to the Desert

The people have an ancient legend  
That spring never passes the desert on her way. . . .

The desert, a boundless sea of yellow sand,  
Where pass small craft, camels with tinkling bells.

Slowly they file past, slowly,  
Bearing the colours of spring;

Ten camels bearing ten prospectors,  
Ten youths shouldering ten packs of songs.

The girls are in emerald and scarlet,  
The desert is blossoming with flowers now;

They carry spring's greetings to the desert,  
Driving away the silence of centuries.

They come, spring has come, and behind them  
Are steel plants, power stations, trains. . . .

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

MALCHINHU

## Out in the Storm

In March the grasslands are still in the grip of winter. At dawn a milky mist shrouds the steppe and utter stillness reigns. Flights of birds plunge through the mist to circle in the sky but none of them sing; for the northeast wind warns them that spring is not yet here nor has the time come for singing.

Another flock of birds took flight, startled by our horses' hoof beats.

Since Dawa and I had to travel about two hundred li over the grassland, we set off from Paochang as soon as there was a faint glow in the east. Paochang is a small town on the Chahar steppe, and though its temperature is no higher than in the surrounding country, folk fancy it is warmer. A shepherd once told me: "Paochang is a cosy spot: inside its walls is like the Buddhist paradise." Of course, there is nothing magic about this: compared with the grassland this compact community, with mud huts instead of yurts, does seem a paradise.

There was some truth, though, in what the shepherd said. As soon as we left Paochang and headed north an icy blast came howling into our faces, making it scarcely

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Malchinhu, outstanding Mongolian young writer, has many stories to his name among which *By the River Shand* was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 2, 1957. He is also author of the novel, *On the Vast Grasslands*.

possible to breathe. But my horse pricked up its ears, puffed two plumes of white vapour from its nostrils, shook its silver-frosted head and started trotting forward. At once my spirits rose. These horses of the steppe, accustomed to wind and snow, are a hardy breed and apparently able to read their riders' minds. The moment you jump astride one, it fairly brims over with energy as if to reassure you. No horseman can help but like these game little steeds.

"I've already taken a fancy to this horse!" I called to Dawa who was riding beside me.

"That's only natural. The hardest nomad has a soft spot in his heart for his horse."

We cantered along the snow-covered steppe. By degrees the morning mist scattered, and from time to time the sun gleamed through the clouds, only to disappear again. The clouds grew denser, thicker and blacker, till they seemed just above our heads.

The changeful spring weather on the steppe causes travellers endless anxiety and hardship. But I was hopeful that the overcast sky would clear.

"The weather's not going to play any tricks on us today, is it?" I asked Dawa.

He did not answer at once, but reined in his horse and threw back his head to study the northern sky. Then he looked east and south. What he saw made him whip up his horse and shout:

"Let's gallop!"

His horse shot forward and mine followed suit.

Galloping up on his left, I leaned over to grasp his reins.

"What's the matter? Can these clouds eat you?"

He laughed. "Not these clouds, but a blizzard can. See how dense that cloud bank is, and how still? Before we've gone thirty li a big storm will strike."

"If a high wind springs up, we shall be all right." I was still hopeful.

"Well, so long as a man is well mounted and well clad, a snowstorm is nothing to be afraid of."

"Yes, we're both warmly dressed, and we've three horses between the two of us. What does it matter?"

The white horse belonged to the Mingan Taibus Banner government. The messenger who had ridden it over a few days previously had fallen ill, and in order not to hold things up, one of the League Committee had asked us to take the horse back to the Mingan Taibus Banner.

The wind had dropped, the mist had scattered, the sky was growing more and more overcast. Though not an eagle was in sight, birds were wheeling wildly up and down, from side to side, by their panic confirming the approach of a storm. But for the moment the steppe was still with a deathly stillness.

"Twenty *li* to the north are the pastures where I tended sheep as a boy."

It seemed odd, just before a fearful storm, to hear Dawa speak of the pastures he had known as a boy. Maybe it showed a natural nostalgia for home, maybe he wanted to reassure me that we wouldn't lose our way in the coming storm.

"Is it good pasture land?" I asked.

His face lit up, and he leaned towards me flourishing his whip to say:

"That pasture land of ours, why, in summer and autumn it's heaven! Just the sight of it makes your mouth water! The cattle love it! If you want water, there's Shand River, so clear you can see to its bed. If you want pasture, the alfalfa and *agie* grass grow over your knees. When summer comes the place is a sea of music! You hear skylarks everywhere. Sometimes I fancy every blade of grass and every grain of sand is singing!"

"That's all very fine, Dawa. Don't exaggerate — presently I shall see for myself."

"I'm not exaggerating. I swear that's what our pasture is like." He paused, then went on: "But in winter the place is a death trap. In a blizzard the whole grassland is a mass of ice, the cattle are buried in snow. In the old days, when that happened, thousands and tens of thousand would starve or freeze to death — it just about broke your

heart! The last year or so we've learned better how to cope; but even so, each blizzard takes a toll of cattle."

He knit his brows and stared at his horse's mane, but his thoughts were far away with the white bones of countless cattle lost in the storms. That reminded me of one storm I had been in on the steppe. Every soul had knit brows from morning till night, and even the cheeriest among them fell silent as mindless of their exhaustion they battled with the elements.

"There's going to be a blizzard today — that's certain."

Dawa's voice recalled me to reality. Without another word, he fastened his sheepskin cap more tightly and rode on.

The storm drew nearer and nearer. Dark clouds hung over our heads like huge black boulders. Wind whirled out of every crevice in the snowdrifts, to catch up the snow in the air and hurl it with tremendous force at the ground. Soon the earth was completely white.

The further we pressed north, the harder the going. Ridges, bushes, trees, streams and roads were all buried in snow. Had I been travelling alone, my horse and I must have fallen into one of the deep drifts. But Dawa, born and bred here, knew this district like the palm of his own hand. He knew the position of every road and hollow, as if he had magic eyes to see under the snow.

"Com — rade — Mal — chin — hu. . ."

Dawa's voice carried faintly back.

"Eh? What did you say?"

"The other side — of this hill — is where I herded sheep."

But as we rode down the slope the storm broke in all its fury. Snow no longer whirled lightly through the air, but pelted into our faces with the force of bullets. The wind no longer sobbed low, but howled like a wild wolf, sending snow billowing up, buffeting the snowflakes in the sky, drowning all other sounds on earth in its shrieking and howling. The temperature fell abruptly.

At about two in the afternoon we started up another hill. The track was so narrow that the horses had to go slowly. I suddenly found that I could not open my eyes — my lashes

were frozen together. By dint of warming them for some time with my mitten, I melted the ice and was able to look round. Dawa's mount, ahead of me, was almost lost to sight in the snow. My own horse was sinking into deep snow at each step, as it plodded laboriously forward with lowered head. Both horse and rider wore a coat of ice.

As we mounted the hill, our sheepskin jackets seemed no thicker than paper. The icy blast froze the marrow of my bones, my hands and face were numb, I was shuddering. I thought of urging Dawa to find some place out of the wind where we could warm up; but his fearless advance gave me fresh courage, and I forced myself to follow.

The hurricane on top of the hill was so violent that no rider could sit erect. I closed my eyes and lay over my horse's mane, letting it find its own path, though one false step on that icy track might have landed us in a crevasse.

We pressed on and on, on and on. I had fallen into a coma, when my horse shied suddenly to the right. I pulled on the reins and stared round. Four or five feet to the left was a dark, hazy shape. On closer inspection I saw it was a horse with someone in a white sheepskin crouching beside it. I heard Dawa ask:



"Who's that? What are you doing?"

With a supreme effort the figure rose to its feet and staggered towards us, trying to speak but failing. Only its eyes expressed surprise and delight. Dawa jumped to the ground and cried:

"Why are you crouching here in a snowstorm?"

Dawa seemed to know the stranger. I dismounted too and trudged across the deep snow. As I drew nearer, I saw that it was a girl.

"Soliya! What are you doing here?" asked Dawa.

The girl's lips quivered, but not a word could she say. Her tongue was numb. She was obviously half frozen. Unless we took prompt action she would die. Dawa and I could not think what to do. Even if we found some shelter from the storm, there was no fuel to start a fire, and in any case she could not be exposed to a fire in her present state. Yet Dawa said there was no house within thirty *li*. Finally, deciding to give her some exercise, we went to rouse her horse. But its four hoofs seemed nailed to the ground; no matter how we beat or pulled it, it would not move. It was clearly utterly spent.

"Let's leave this horse here. The main thing is to save Soliya. She can ride the messenger's horse."

I approved Dawa's decision. Between us we helped Soliya into the saddle. A violent gust of wind nearly unseated her, but we held her steady and managed to mount ourselves. Though our horses had travelled over a hundred *li*, they seemed to understand our plight, for they plunged off through the storm.

They raced a good twenty *li* before slowing down. By now the worst fury of the storm was spent, the outlines of distant hills were faintly discernible. I turned to look at Soliya, who stared back at me wide-eyed like a mischievous child.

"How are you?"

Instead of answering, she only smiled shyly. Dawa interrupted:

"Oh, I forgot to introduce you. This is my friend Mal-chinhu, who writes." He turned to me: "Soliya is a nurse in Paochang Hospital, and a great reader too."

Too numb to shake hands, we nodded to each other, and she said:

"After that gallop I feel warmer."

"Someone who can talk isn't dead, Soliya. You had a narrow escape!"

The nurse heaved a long sigh.

"Ah, this time there should be no loss of life."

"That's it. You bear a charmed life!"

Soliya cast Dawa a glance.

"I'm not talking about myself, Dawa."

"Aren't you? You were buried so long in the snow you couldn't speak."

"That's not what I meant. I was trying to tell you that another small life has come safely into the world."

"Who's that?"

Little by little we got the story out of her. Between three and four that morning, when she was on duty at the hospital, a frantic knocking had sounded at the gate. The porter must have been fast asleep, for no one opened the gate till she ran out. She found a middle-aged man with a drooping moustache, who demanded to see the principal at once, for his wife had been in labour for two days and two nights and needed medical attention desperately. She took him straight to the doctor, who agreed to set out at once. She hastily collected a stethoscope and everything needed for the delivery, while the doctor put on his coat and prepared to go. But then the middle-aged shepherd told them that he lived in a settlement of the Mingan Taibus Banner a hundred *li* north of Paochang, and he had brought no extra horse—he hoped the doctor would ride his own. The doctor, obviously taken aback, exclaimed: "I thought you lived just down the street!"

Since the hospital had one horse only, they lost no time in borrowing a steady-looking mare from another organization. With Soliya on the hospital horse and the doctor on the mare, they had set out from Paochang soon after four in the morning.

"Then why did we find you all alone buried in the snow on the hill?" demanded Dawa anxiously. "What's happened to the others?"

With numb fingers she wiped the snow from her face, and drew a deep breath before going on. They had been about fifty *li* from Paochang when the storm broke. They pressed on in the teeth of the gale for another twenty *li* or so, but by the time they reached this hill the doctor's mare could go no further. There was no village ahead, no settlement behind—nowhere to turn. In desperation the shepherd pounded his boot with his whip. In order not to keep the woman in labour waiting any longer than necessary, Soliya offered her horse to the doctor, urging him to go on with the shepherd while she stayed there. To this the doctor agreed, but the shepherd demurred: "I can't let you freeze to death to save my wife." That only increased her determination, though. And since there really was no alternative, and no good purpose would be served by all three of them stopping there, the shepherd gave his consent. As they were leaving he told her: "As soon as I've taken the doctor home, I'll bring a horse back for you."

By the time she had tethered the mare to a tree, the doctor and shepherd had disappeared in the snow. "Now



I'm all on my own!" she thought. She felt an urge to race after them, to shout at the top of her voice ordering the blizzard to stop. But she seemed to hear the first exhausted yet exultant sigh of a mother who has just given birth; she seemed to hear the raucous yet touching cry of a new-born babe. Calming down, she found a place out of the wind and, wrapping her coat tightly round her, she crouched in the snow. Blast after icy blast howled through her coat, layer after layer of snowflakes covered her. . . .

At this point in Soliya's narrative, a cluster of huts loomed into sight. They were Mongolian yurts and mud huts, and we could descry figures outside tending the cattle. Dawa suggested:

"We're tired out, and so are the horses. Let's go in there and drink some tea to warm up a little."

"If they've room, we can spend the day there and Soliya can have a good rest."

The nurse protested indignantly:

"No, if the storm stops I want to hurry to that shepherd's house today. If there's to be an operation, the doctor can hardly manage single-handed."

"Never mind whether you're leaving today or not. Let's go and have some tea first."

Dawa headed his horse towards the house, and Soliya and I followed.

We alighted at a yurt in front of which two horses were tethered. A man who had been busy with some work at the door disappeared before we got there. When we called out, a kindly old woman looked out to stare at us in astonishment before hobbling out to bid us a warm welcome. Brushing the snow from our clothes, she muttered: "Horhi — poor things!" After we had tethered our horses we went inside. Cattle dung was burning in the stove and milk tea was bubbling in the samovar, filling the whole yurt with its fragrance. To us who had struggled all day through the wind and snow, it was a haven of refuge.

"Did you have a good journey? That was some storm today!"

A sturdy, middle-aged man with a drooping moustache rose from the rug where he had been sitting and held out his hand in greeting. I looked at him coldly and shook hands perfunctorily. Why was this able-bodied man toasting himself by the fire and drinking milk tea instead of seeing to the cattle in this storm? I'd not met many rascals like that on the steppe. As I stared at him in disapproval, a look of delighted surprise spread over his face. He strode up to Soliya and cried:

"Nurse!"

And Soliya responded with equally pleased amazement:

"What are you doing here? Where's the doctor?"

"The doctor's in my home. I was afraid you'd frozen to death! I started back for you as soon as I could, but when I got here my horse's harness broke and I came in to mend it. I never expected to meet you here. How did you get here? Are you all right?"

"First tell me: What about the mother and child?"

"The doctor operated as soon as he got there, and the child was born at once. Now mother and son are both doing well!"

Soliya asked no more. With her right hand she ruffled the hair curling over her forehead, while two tears of joy welled up from her great black eyes.

*Translated by Gladys Yang  
Illustrations by Yao Yu-to*

HAN WEN-CHOU

## The Blue Handkerchief

A long line of eight mule carts, driven by eight young members of the Red Flag Agricultural Co-op, rumbled down the big road leading to the ridge. The Red Flag was well known among the villagers here for its sleek, handsome mules. In fact, the number of mules owned by the co-op and its success in grooming them were the envy of the neighbourhood and the pride of the co-op members.

The eight young men drove at a leisurely pace, maintaining not too much nor too little distance between the carts. They were near enough to each other so that passers-by could tell at a glance that they were all from one co-op but not so near as to shorten the procession and miss the chance of impressing people with the length of the line made by the Red Flag carts when they went out. Miao Ching-shan, the leader of the cart team, was particularly proud of the co-op's name and guarded its prestige jealously. When the brown mule driven by Chang Lu-hai lagged behind the others, Ching-shan scolded the driver for being so slow and insisted on his catching up with the rest. Later, the roan mule driven by Li San-pao started to canter and went a little way ahead of the others, Ching-shan scolded Li too and accused him of being too much in a hurry to go

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home and see his wife. Ching-shan then brought the black mule he was driving to the head of the file and set the pace of the procession at just the right tempo.

In a little while Ching-shan was bothered again. He found that Li sat on the edge of his cart with his legs hanging over the side just covering the part where the words "Red Flag Co-op" were written. This Ching-shan would not allow and insisted that the driver pull his legs up.

"The co-op's name is written on the other carts too. What does it matter if people can't see the name on this one cart?" grumbled Li crossly.

"If you cover the words," said Ching-shan with childlike insistence, "how will people know whose cart it is?"

"We go our way and others go theirs, who cares whether they know or not."

"No," said Ching-shan firmly. "You mustn't cover the words."

In the end Li pulled up his feet and sat cross-legged.

After rounding a bend in the road, Ching-shan and his mates discovered a young girl of about twenty walking in front. It is common knowledge that young travellers are particularly susceptible to young girls, the sight of whom is apt to lead to some kind of trouble. They cannot refrain from expressing their views and commenting at length on the appearance of the girl and are wont to discuss her hair, eyes, clothes and even hands and feet, caring little whether she be a stranger or friend or whether she may or may not take offence at being so discussed. Of course, when and if the girl turns out to be an acquaintance of the travellers the complications sometimes become serious.

Ching-shan had always been a quiet sort and was usually not inclined to join in such mischief. But the young lady walking in front seemed particularly attractive to him today, so much so that even he added his comments. While the young men were busily discussing the pedestrian, the mule team caught up with her. To their regret none of the drivers knew the girl. Ching-shan was overwhelmed by a strong desire to talk to her, but they were strangers and



he didn't know what to say. Luckily, the girl opened her mouth at that point.

"Where are you people going?" she asked.

"Miao Family Village," answered all eight young men at the same time. "Where do you want to go?"

"Su Village. Will you let me ride home with you if I pay you for it?"

The young men were delighted. "You are from a neighbouring village and a brother co-op, why talk about payment? Just hop on," they said.

"We're not professional drivers. We don't want any money," said Chang.

"Forget about payment. We've eight carts here; take your pick," said Li.

Ching-shan was very anxious to have her on his cart so he said hurriedly, "Come ride on my cart, this mule is steadier than the others."

All the young men offered the girl a seat; all of them, putting on their best manners, seemed ever so amiable. The girl said nothing, tossed her little bamboo basket onto the first cart and jumped on.

The line of eight mule carts rumbled onwards. Ching-shan looked after his passenger with eager solicitude, now telling her to sit further in, now asking her to sit tight. . . . As the other seven failed to get the fair passenger, they were green with envy. They began to whisper and comment on the way their leader was treating the girl.

"Look, how sweetly he speaks to her, as though she were his own sister, . . ." said one.

"He treats her with as much warmth as if she were one of the family, . . ." said another.

Ching-shan pretended not to hear them. He took a good look at his passenger. She had beautiful features and a face so lovely that he couldn't take his eyes off her. Ching-shan was twenty-three but had no girl friend as yet. A handsome young man with an even temperament, he could easily qualify as the most eligible bachelor in the neighbourhood. He was outstanding in farm work, being the vice-chairman of the co-op and also leader of the second team. In the Youth League branch, he was education officer and chairman of the club. He was an activist in every field of work and his name could be found among the most advanced whenever the county government called meetings of model workers in this or that respect, whether it was one for model farmers, or model night-school students, or best propaganda worker, or outstanding health worker, or Youth League Congress or young activists' meeting. . . . In a word, he excelled in everything except courtship. Ingenious and always able to overcome difficulties in his work, he was quite helpless and very shy with girls.

Strange as it may seem, when he saw this girl on the road today he suddenly felt a surge of confidence. When she got onto his cart, he became very excited. He longed to draw her into conversation, but, alas, could not think of a suitable subject. Then a scheme occurred to him. He raised his whip over the black mule so that the animal started to gallop. Soon, the cart was far ahead of the others and he, who had himself stressed the importance of keeping a suitable distance between the carts, cared nothing at all about leaving the other carts behind. With the mule racing along,

it was only natural that the cart jolted and rocked. The fair passenger was badly shaken and she gasped for breath.

"What's the matter with you?" she cried crossly, producing a blue handkerchief and wiping the perspiration on her brow. "What a way to drive! I can't stand this. Stop, stop the cart, I'd rather not ride any more. Don't you hear me, driver?"

"Don't be afraid," said Ching-shan glibly. "This stretch of road is too rough. If you are afraid of falling, I'll sit by your side to protect you." So saying he sat down next to the girl.

They rumbled along leisurely for a small stretch. He wanted badly to say something to her but he couldn't hit upon the right subject. "Where have you been just now?" he asked finally.

"Lu Village, to visit my aunt."

"Lu Village is at least fifty *li* from your village. How come she lives so far away?"

"How would I know?" The girl sounded rather cross.

She was a recent graduate of the school in town and had returned home to work in the village agricultural co-op as assistant accountant. She was an activist in work and extremely popular in Su Village. It happened that she had heard about Miao Ching-shan of Miao Family Village and how he excelled in farm work and other activities and was eager to meet him. But she had no idea that the driver of the cart was the young man in person. Having hitched a ride on a Miao Family Village cart and being curious about the well-known Ching-shan, she would have liked to find out more about him from the driver. But she was annoyed with this rude young man who had made the cart rock and jolt until she could hardly catch her breath, and decided not to get into conversation with him.

Ching-shan could sense that she was angry with him and that only made him more tongue-tied than ever. He racked his brains for a way out of this difficulty but all to no avail. In the end, he formulated a very stupid course. The two of them were sitting side by side with a gap of about half a foot between them. To bridge this gap, Ching-shan de-

liberately guided the mule towards the middle of the road which was uneven and strewn with stones. Every time the wheels creaked over a stone or cavity in the road, the cart pitched and jolted so the two young people were tossed closer together. The girl found herself now thrown against the driver's broad chest, now brushing shoulders with him. This indignity made her extremely angry and she found riding on the cart quite unbearable. But the mule was still trotting briskly along and she dared not jump down.

Wiping the hot perspiration on her brow, she scolded, "What are you trying to do? What do you mean playing such tricks on me? Halt now, I won't ride in your wretched cart any more. Halt, I say. Are your donkey ears stuffed or what? Can't you hear me?"

Ching-shan flushed with embarrassment at her harsh words. His scheme had only irritated her, though he wanted so much to please her. She's calling me names, he thought. That means she will not want to be friends with me. This thought cooled his ardour by some sixty per cent, but still he was not willing to give up hope completely. And he did not want to halt the cart for if he did and she got down, his last hope of making friends with her would be dashed.

"Please don't blame me," he defended himself lamely. "It's all because the road is poor. Now don't get cross and say nasty things. After all, you may run into our carts again in the future."

The girl did not relent in the least. "I'd rather die of exhaustion walking than ride in your cart again. Halt the cart now, I want to get down. Are you stone deaf?"

More than anything else Ching-shan dreaded her getting off the cart. The more she talked about not riding with him the faster he drove. Gradually it dawned on the young lady that the man was trying to keep her from going away. She became a little suspicious of his motives and stole a close look at him. To her surprise he was a very good-looking young man with a square, honest face, frank-looking eyes, big hands and strong arms. Why, how nice he looks, she mused, I really like his face very much. But

why is his behaviour so stupid and rude? Ah well, I'll see what he's up to.

Ching-shan noticed with relief that the girl no longer scolded. He had nothing to say either. He longed to gaze again at her sweet face but he dared not turn round to look at her for fear of finding a cold angry glare in her eyes.

Suddenly someone by the roadside shouted, "Wait, wait, let me ride back with you."

Ching-shan turned to discover a fellow villager named Wang Chang-yu behind the cart. Wang had gone to a neighbouring village to order bricks for his new house and was on his way home. Though Ching-shan heard his request for a ride, he did not want him to get on because Wang was known as a gossip. He simply murmured, "Hop on," but did not stop the cart. Instead, he cracked the whip once and the black mule went faster.

"Couldn't you stop the animal so I could get on?" Wang asked with annoyance as he chased behind the cart.

"Hurry now, run a little faster and you'll make it," said Ching-shan with a placating smile.

Wang saw that he was making the mule go faster. "Never mind," he said angrily, "since you don't want me, I won't ride with you."

When Ching-shan saw that Wang was really angry he had to bring the mule to a halt. He knew though that stopping the cart boded no good and sure enough before the cart had come fully to a stop, the girl turned and jumped down. Without so much as a thank you, she walked huffily down the road.

Ching-shan was, of course, upset by the girl going off like that. "Why are you leaving?" he shouted after her. "I say, why go now? There's plenty of room on the cart for three. . . ."

The young lady didn't even turn her head, and he soon realized it was no use. He began to harbour a grudge against the unfortunate Wang Chang-yu, whom he felt to have been the cause of his failure. Yes, the man had barged in at the wrong moment and ruined everything. When Wang began chatting with him, he refused to be drawn into con-

versation. When Wang asked where the girl was from, he made no answer. Finally when Wang wanted to know why he was so out of sorts that day, he simply turned his face away in silence. This turning of his head, however, enabled him to discover a treasure. The blue handkerchief with which the girl had mopped her forehead had been dropped on the cart. Ching-shan furtively picked it up, not wanting Wang to catch him in the act. Stuffing it hastily into his pocket, he thought that now he would have an excuse to see her again in the future.

After she left the cart, the girl hurried off at such a pace that she soon began to perspire in the warm July sun. When she reached for her handkerchief she discovered that it was lost. I must have dropped it on the cart, she thought, and she came back.

"I lost my hanky on your cart," she told Ching-shan. "Will you get off and let me look for it?"

Ching-shan had come to the conclusion that he had bungled all chances of making friends with her that day through his own stupidity and bluntness. But he meant to have another try later on, so he was determined not to give up the handkerchief. "I bet you lost it on the way before you got on," he said.

The girl paid no attention to him. She started walking back in the direction the cart had come.

Ching-shan was, after all, honest and good-hearted. He didn't want to see the girl walk back under the sun in vain so he shouted, "Don't go back. You won't find it even if you walk all the way."

The girl was more or less sure now that he had picked up her handkerchief. She came to the cart again reluctantly and asked him to return her handkerchief. Again Ching-shan said he had not laid eyes on any handkerchief. But when the girl turned to the road to search, he remarked that she would be wasting her time. This went on until the girl was positive that he had picked up her handkerchief. She was so annoyed with him by then that she decided to give up the handkerchief rather than say another word to the rascal.

Looking angry and very cold, she walked slowly behind the cart.

The mule cart drove on. When she was a fair distance behind, Wang asked his young companion, "I say, Ching-shan, were you telling the truth when you said you didn't see her handkerchief?" The young lady happened to hear the sentence and the name Ching-shan struck her ears. Could the young driver really be Miao Ching-shan of whom she had heard so much about? But why had he behaved so abominably? She craned her neck to get another look at the handsome driver, but the cart had already disappeared in a whirl of dust.

Ching-shan had planned to think seriously of what line to take over the matter of the blue handkerchief when he got home. But when he had unharnessed the mule and went to his own room, the secretary of the Youth League branch came in to see him before he could even peep at the treasured handkerchief. There was to be a meeting on propaganda work in the township and the secretary wanted him to collect the necessary materials. As soon as the secretary left, Ching-shan's hand reached into his pocket. But he had merely pulled out a corner of the handkerchief when someone else came in to see him about compost making. People arrived, one after another, to discuss work and other problems so that he was kept busy until bed time.

After all his visitors had left, Ching-shan remembered the handkerchief and brought it out for another look. The sight of the dainty blue handkerchief brought to mind the sweet face of the girl he met that day and also the hard words she had hurled at him. The more he mused the more he realized how blunt and awkward his own behaviour had been. "How can I be so stupid," he cursed himself inwardly. In the end, he decided to send the handkerchief back to its owner and let the matter drop until he could find out more about her.

But here he was confronted by a real problem — he didn't even know her name. To whom could he send the handkerchief? What a fool not even to ask her name. Now he

had to let the matter drop completely. Since nothing had come of his eagerness to make friends, and since the memory of the names the fair passenger had called him still made him flush with shame, it was only natural that he had no desire to publicize the whole incident.

Someone else, though, was only too eager to publicize it for him and this was Wang Chang-yu who rode back with him that day. Wang was considered quite a character in Miao Family Village. He was very warm-hearted and interested in his fellow men but, alas, he was too fond of wagging his tongue. If he happened to hear of anything, he lost no time in spreading it all over the village. He liked best juicy gossip overheard outside doors and windows, and this he passed on, adding his own special embroidery. To Wang, the mere fact that Ching-shan gave a ride to a pretty young girl was in itself good material worth publicizing. What was more he was suspected of picking up the girl's blue handkerchief. Wang was so conscientious at his publicity task that within two days the whole village had heard about it.

About a week after that memorable day, Ching-shan suddenly received a letter which as it happened was delivered into his hands by Wang Chang-yu. The sender's address on the envelope was, "The Spark Agricultural Co-op, Su Village." Ching-shan had neither friend nor kin in Su Village, so his mind went at once to the girl he met on the road. Perhaps she was still so angry with him she had written this letter to scold him some more. Maybe she wanted her handkerchief back. But why had the letter fallen into this gossip Wang's hands? Ching-shan was wary enough of him not to open the letter in his presence. Wang, on the other hand, was curious to know the contents of the letter. He was sure it would provide him with new material for his tongue-wagging. He stuck around after he gave Ching-shan the letter but there was nothing he could do when the young man pocketed the letter and firmly walked away.

Ching-shan opened the letter with an uneasy heart. His eyes glanced first at the signature at the bottom of the page

and the name Yang Yueh-ngo made him jump. He had heard already about the popular Yang Yueh-ngo, assistant accountant in Su Village, an educated girl progressive in her thinking. He held such girls in great awe. Yueh-ngo was very charming in the letter, apologizing for speaking so harshly to him the other day and admitting her fault in calling him names. She also mentioned the blue handkerchief but said nothing about wanting it back.

Instead of wondering why she didn't ask him to return the handkerchief, Ching-shan was bothered with only one thought, that this girl who had so attracted him should turn out to be Yang Yueh-ngo. If he had known who she was that day, he would never have dared to dream of getting her as his girl friend. Yang Yueh-ngo was a beautiful and talented person who must have chosen a boy friend already. Even if she hadn't any particular friend yet, she would never have eyes for a shy and awkward fellow like him. When he remembered his own stupid behaviour on the road, Ching-shan wondered why he was so sure of himself and bitterly regretted his appearance of boldness. Such show of cocksureness eventually makes a man into a laughing-stock, he knew. He wrote her a very simple short reply, enclosed the blue handkerchief in the letter and told himself that he had better not dream about her and love any more.

A few days later, a big annual fair took place in the town of Luho only ten *li* from Miao Family Village. Most villagers never miss the chance of going to this important fair and Miao Ching-shan too went.

Ever since Wang the gossip spread the tale of Ching-shan's meeting with Yang Yueh-ngo on the road, Ching-shan realized that it was best to keep clear of him. Unfortunately it was Wang who saw Yang Yueh-ngo's letter to Ching-shan in the post-box and brought it to him. Unable to find out what the girl from Su Village had written, Wang jumped to the conclusion that the two were sure to meet again at the Luho fair. He made up his mind to get material for gossiping on this occasion. Despite Ching-shan's reluctance, he insisted on accompanying the young man to the

fair. Ching-shan thought up devious ways to shake him off but all to no avail. In the end they went together.

There were crowds of people at the fair. Brightly dressed young wives and girls flitted about in and out among the throng. Teams of stage performers went hither and thither beating gongs and drums. By the entrance of the acrobatic show, a small brass band played cheerfully. Outside the magic lantern shed, a man was shouting to attract customers.

"Where shall we go first?" Wang asked his young companion.

"Let's look around on the street first," said Ching-shan.

The two of them were stopped by a small team of opera singers coming by and performing a skit. People surrounded the performers and Ching-shan found himself becoming absorbed in the performance. Then he heard a young woman's voice say, "Let's move a bit towards the east side, sister, it's too crowded here." The voice was so familiar that he looked up to see who it was. Aiya! It was Yang Yueh-ngo! With one hand on the arm of a young matron, who must have been the sister she was talking to, she kept her big limpid eyes on Ching-shan's face. Since he stood on the east side, he was sure the girl had talked about moving towards the east side in order to draw her sister's attention to him and to tell her all about his rascally manners on the road the other day. The mere thought of this possibility made him lose appetite for the opera performance.

"Come," said he, giving Wang's jacket a tug. "I'm not interested in this. Let's go see the puppet show."

Wang Chang-yu had noticed the unusual encounter between Ching-shan and Yueh-ngo. He believed that they had exchanged a message with their eyes and would probably meet in private somewhere later. So he followed Ching-shan closely. Soon after they got to the puppet show they heard the familiar woman's voice again. "Sister, this puppet show comes from Hsiao-yi County. It's better than our local show." Ching-shan turned and saw it was Yueh-ngo again. At the moment he dreaded meeting her. What was more he knew Wang would make up all sorts of stories

about this girl and himself when he went back to the village. It would be safer for him to go away.

"It's so crowded here," he said to his companion. "Let's go to see the magic lantern." This time Wang thought the matter over. If I keep following him he'll be too bashful to speak to that girl. I had better leave him for the moment but watch him in secret.

Aloud, he said, "I want to watch the puppet show. You can go to the magic lantern."

Ching-shan had long wanted to get rid of Wang's company so he agreed readily.

Yueh-ngo, on her part, had also noticed Ching-shan's discomfiture at sight of her and she more or less guessed the cause. She was not a little surprised that such a smart young man should become so timid and shy in her presence. However, all this only made him more attractive and interesting in her eyes. She decided to tease him. A few minutes after Ching-shan sat down on a vacant bench in the magic lantern shed, he heard once again the woman's voice saying, "Sister, come sit down here. Let's have a look at the magic lantern show."

Ching-shan turned to discover that the girl had sat down right beside him. Feeling like a thief caught red-handed, he stood up abruptly and walked away. This time he made sure she couldn't see where he was going, dodging here and there among the crowd until he emerged outside the cloth enclosure of the acrobatic show. He sighed with relief. What ill luck today, he mused, to bump into her everywhere. It was a torment to see her and be reminded that he had no hopes at all but had simply made a fool of himself. He had no desire to enjoy himself at the fair any more. Taking a quick turn round the basket and dung crate stalls, usually not frequented by women, he left Luho town in low spirits.

Ching-shan had gone barely three or four *li* when to his surprise Wang caught up with him.

"Found the fair very interesting, eh?" he greeted Ching-shan with a significant smile.

Ching-shan did not understand the meaning behind Wang's words. "It wasn't so bad."

"You got a treasure today, may I have a look?"

"Nonsense! I didn't buy a thing today!"

"I know you didn't buy anything, but you got something precious, nevertheless."

"Don't be ridiculous! You're always making fun of people."

"Come, stop pretending. Do you dare swear you didn't get anything?"

"Of course! If I got anything special, I'll treat you to half a catty of wine as forfeit."

"Good. I'll take you at your word. Now, do you dare let me search your pockets?"

Ching-shan knew that he had nothing but a handkerchief in one pocket, so he said, "As you please." He stood still and allowed Wang to probe into the pocket with his handkerchief. To his surprise, Wang brought out two handkerchiefs: one was his own, the other was the familiar blue handkerchief he once picked up. Ching-shan stared in amazement. I've returned it to her. How did it get back into my possession? he wondered. He couldn't make head or tail of the matter.

What actually happened was that Yueh-ngo who wanted to tease him had secretly tucked her blue handkerchief into his pocket when she sat down beside him in the magic lantern shed. Poor Ching-shan had been so flustered at sight of the girl that he hadn't noticed. But Wang, watching them from the side, saw everything. When Ching-shan told his friend that he really knew nothing about what happened, Wang enlightened him.

Ching-shan didn't exactly know what to think of the girl and the whole incident. He only knew that Wang would make a big story out of this. He earnestly begged him to keep the matter secret and swore that he had no chance at all with that pretty girl they met once on the road. Wang promised not to publicize the matter further. However, the news that Ching-shan acquired a handkerchief at the fair spread quickly throughout Miao Family

Village and reached even the ears of the co-op chairman and the Party secretary.

Both of them thought that Ching-shan and the versatile Yang Yueh-ngo would make a wonderful pair. They went to the extent of advising Ching-shan to write to her. Ching-shan himself, as was usual with him in questions involving the fair sex, wavered and hesitated. Again, Wang, the busybody, learned of it. She is such a nice girl, he thought, if Ching-shan doesn't write to show his feelings for her, the situation may develop unfavourably for him. Then our Miao Family Village won't get this pretty girl as a bride. The thought disturbed his warm old heart. Finally he struck upon a scheme. He took up his pen and wrote a letter to Yueh-ngo in the name of Miao Ching-shan. Three days later, Ching-shan got a long letter from Su Village. The letter read:

Dear Comrade Ching-shan,

Your letter has been duly received. I am very glad you introduced yourself so much in detail in your letter. In fact, many of your deeds are known to me already though not quite so concretely. I do think that you have achieved a lot in every sphere of work and that is all very good. But from the tone of your letter I'm afraid you suffer a little from complacency. Perhaps that was why you talked about yourself with such evident satisfaction and pride. For instance you said, "Everybody in the county knows that I am the best student in spare time studies. I am well known as the number one in farm work too. As for propaganda work, it goes without saying I excel in that field too. . . ." Don't you think all this sound a bit too conceited? But you are still young; I'm sure you'll be able to overcome your small shortcomings. Now let me also introduce myself a bit. . . .

Ching-shan could read on no more. The girl was deliberately making things up to make a fool of him. He began to suspect that perhaps she was not a very nice person. She probably enjoyed toying with him. In a fit of anger, he tore the letter to pieces and thought of her no more.

On Mid-Autumn Festival Ching-shan came home from the fields at noon. As soon as he entered his garden gate he heard a very familiar girl's voice inside, saying, "Sister, let's go outside for a look. . . ." It was Yang Yueh-ngo. Ching-shan was so nervous and allergic to Yueh-ngo's voice saying "sister," that he was overtaken by a wild impulse to flee. Instead of entering the house, he turned on his heel. But he had been spied by his nine-year-old sister, La-mei. "Ma," she cried, "brother is running away." This only added to Ching-shan's panic and he ran all the faster.

Through two casual encounters and the exchange of letters, Yueh-ngo had discovered that the well-known Miao Ching-shan, although he had appeared too blunt and rash at first and too timid later on, was nevertheless a lovable person. And strange as it may seem, she began to feel that he was the man for her. She also decided that it was now time for her to take the initiative towards this proud and cocksure man who had all of a sudden become timid and humble.

Now there was an old custom in these parts. Usually, before a marriage was finally decided upon, the girl would pay a visit to the man's family and this was called, "looking over the house." Though nowadays marriages are arranged by free choice, the age-old custom prevails. When the girl comes to "look over the house" she does not come alone but must be accompanied either by her mother or a kinswoman. When they arrive at the man's house, a good meal must be prepared to entertain them. If they stay for the meal that means the girl is willing to consider the marriage; if not, the marriage is to be mentioned no more.

This time, it was not Yueh-ngo's idea to come to Miao Family Village to "look over the house." The suggestion had come from her mother, who discovered that her daughter had given her heart to Ching-shan. To the mother's mind, since other people's daughters visited the intended's family to "look over the house," it was only proper and right that a daughter of hers should do the same. Though Yueh-ngo herself cared little about such old customs, she was glad of a chance to see Ching-shan again. That was

how she let herself be taken to Ching-shan's house by her elder sister.

Ching-shan did not know why she had come. Following a wild impulse, he had simply run away. His heart was still thumping by the time he got to the club. Pretty soon his sister La-mei appeared. "Brother, Ma says you are to come home at once."

"Who's come?" Ching-shan asked hastily.

"Oh, lots of people," answered his sister. "Two women guests and a great many neighbours! Ma wants you to come right away."

Ching-shan recalled that nonsensical letter Yueh-ngo sent him as well as his own awkwardness at the fair and the nasty things she said to him on the road. How am I ever to face her after all this? he wondered. The easiest way out seemed to be to keep away. "You go home first, La-mei," he said. "I'm busy. I still have to write the black-board newspaper."

La-mei left reluctantly. She soon returned though. "Brother," she said with annoyance. "Ma is getting mad at you. Come home with me."

Ching-shan would not say whether he was coming. "Have those two women guests left?" he asked.

"They've come to 'look over the house,' don't you know? They are staying for dinner. And today is Mid-Autumn Festival too, so we are having a good feast. Why won't you come?"

So Yang Yueh-ngo was staying for a meal on this visit to his house. That means she is willing! Ching-shan felt his heart soaring with happiness. He regretted his own folly in running away. But if he went back now, they'd ask him why he had fled and what reason could he give? He was in a quandary. "You run along, I'll be right back," he told his sister.

La-mei went home but her mother sent her back for her brother again. This time she found only a big padlock on the club door. Ching-shan had returned to the fields on an empty stomach. It was not until a full moon had risen above the eastern hill that he left the fields. He still dared

not go straight home but loitered in the club hoping to get some news about the girl to whom he had long since lost his heart. Before long, La-mei came again. "Where ever have you been, brother? Ma is really angry with you now. Come home quickly. Aren't you hungry?"

Ching-shan had more important things than hunger to think about. "La-mei, have the two women guests gone?" he asked.

"They are staying the night with us," was La-mei's reply. "My future sister-in-law says she's determined to wait for your return. Isn't that good news, brother, I've got a sister-in-law."

Ching-shan finally went home, his heart pounding and his head bent low. He dared not look around for fear of seeing that pretty face. His mother asked him where he had been.

Ching-shan hastened to reply, "I, I . . . today I . . . Ma, what do you want me for?" At this idiotic answer from her big hulk of a son, Ma started to give him a sound lecture!

It was the Mid-Autumn Festival and what was more the prospects for Ching-shan's marriage with one of the nicest girls in the neighbourhood was ninety per cent success, Ma could not help feeling extremely happy. She had prepared a marvellous feast — bought a bottle of Blue Bamboo wine, two catties of moon-cakes, three catties of grapes, four catties of apples, steamed a big batch of buns, prepared four meat dishes and boiled a big pot of fresh tender water chestnuts and green beans. The family and the guests ate and chatted, talked and laughed until the bright full moon hung high in the tree. It suddenly occurred to Ching-shan's mother that they should let the two young people spend some time alone together. "Isn't the moon lovely," she said to Yueh-ngo's sister. "Let's go for a stroll." On this pretext, the mother and sisters left the room.

At first Ching-shan had hoped that the others would go away, for he found them to be in his way. But now that they were gone, he felt at a loss. He wasn't sure whether

he wanted to sit or stand; he felt awkward and ill at ease. He had so much to say to this girl sitting so near, but he didn't know how to start. Yueh-ngo could easily have found a way to begin the conversation, but she had no intention of doing so. She was waiting to see how this awkward young man she had picked for herself would begin. Ching-shan hoped desperately that she would utter a few words; her continued silence made him more flustered than ever.

For quite some time silence reigned in the house. Ching-shan felt more and more desperate. He noticed that the kettle was bubbling on the stove and went to take it down. Here was a subject to grasp at. "The fire's going well," he murmured. "Brings the tea to a boil quickly." Then he heard a noise and searched the room with his eyes. "We wiped out the rats long ago," he muttered again.



"Who could be making the noise?" A big tabby cat sauntered down from the attic and it too became a subject for Ching-shan to grasp at. "Ah, so it's you," he said. "Well, cats aren't very useful any more now."

All this time, Yang Yueh-ngo had been doing her best to suppress the laughter bubbling inside her at Ching-shan's clumsy efforts to make conversation. At last she could hold herself back no longer and burst out with a loud giggle. This was a welcome lead for Ching-shan. "What are you laughing at?" he asked. "Do you think a cat's of much use still?"

"Of course," laughed Yueh-ngo. "Take tonight, for instance, a certain somebody might have been doomed to silence were it not for the cat."

That was how the ice was broken. Once they started they had simply too much to say to each other. They talked about the first time they met when she hitched a ride on his cart, about the fair at Luho, then about the blue handkerchief. Ching-shan asked her if she wanted it back.

"I don't want that one in particular," she said smiling. "But I could do with another one."

Ching-shan handed her one of his. After she pocketed the handkerchief, she asked reproachfully, "I wrote you a letter but why didn't you answer?"

"Because I never wrote you any letter. And you criticized me in your letter saying that I'm too complacent and arrogant. How could I reply when you criticized me without any reason?"

Yueh-ngo was very surprised to hear this. "But I did receive your letter. If you didn't write it, who did?" She decided to make fun of him. "I know, it must have been a little dog or a big tortoise."

"You shouldn't call people names, you know. I wrote that letter for Ching-shan," a man said outside the window, startling the lovers. Ching-shan recognized the voice of Wang Chang-yu. He rushed to the door just in time to see a group of young people running towards the garden gate. Wang Chang-yu was among them. It seemed the

young lovers had had quite an audience eavesdropping on them.

"Chang-yu," Ching-shan called. "Why do you folks run away? Come back. We have plenty of wine here, come and have a few cups. What's more, I owe you half a catty of wine as forfeit. Remember?"

Wang turned his head and said, "We'll settle that account on your wedding night." And he ran off.

Translated by Chang Tang  
Illustrations by Lo Feng

*Goldfish and Wistaria*

(133.5 cm × 66.8 cm)

by Hsu Ku (1823-1896) →

The artist was a monk from Anhwei Province. He excelled in painting landscapes, flowers, fish and birds and occupied an important place in this genre at the end of the Ching dynasty. This painting is one of his later works.





CHIH FANG

### Morning Mist in the Tea Plantations

White, vaporous morning mist  
Covers the tea plantations and the tea plants  
Like an endless length of light gauze,  
Closely swathing all the hills for miles around.

The girls are plucking tea leaves, plucking,  
As if rising out of clouds;  
The girls are plucking, plucking,  
Plucking the tea leaves, plucking the mist as well. . . .

Over all the hills songs burst out,  
Songs like sharp scissors  
To cut through the swathes of gauze,  
Revealing the tea plantations, the slopes, the paths. . . .

The girls pluck tea singing, singing,  
Singing the red sun up from the mountain valley;  
The girls pluck tea singing, singing,  
Their baskets filled with leaves, songs and morning mist!

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

### The Togada Brothers

(TAI)

In the village of Mengsina there once lived an old widow. Together with her two ragged children, she tilled a small plot of land on the hillside. The poor children had no names and their neighbours called them the Togada\* brothers. They did not mind this nickname with its insinuations but went so far as to call themselves Big Togada and Little Togada.

The Togada brothers saw that every day their thrifty old mother ate only the bit of maize left over from their meals and they felt sorry for her. From then on both of them ate only half their fill so there would be more left for the mother. But when she noticed the larger amount left over she began to cook less. Eventually, the brothers decided to ask her to eat first. Of course the loving mother would not eat much knowing that her sons were still hungry. The brothers could not think of any way to enable their mother to have enough to eat. The two of them discussed the matter for several days and nights. Finally they decided to take their pigeons and chickens to a neighbouring county to sell. They also resolved not to come home until they had earned a whole sack of gold. They wanted to have enough so their mother could enjoy a comfortable easy life the rest of her days.

Leaving home, the brothers reached the bustling and prosperous county of Mengpatung. Here they stayed

\*Togada means poverty-stricken.

nearly two years until they had roamed through every little village and rushed through every street of the town. Clothed in rags and eating coarse rice, they saved and stored in a sack every bit of gold earned with their hard labour. As the days went by the sack got heavier and heavier until at last they had a full sack of gold.

The sight of it filled the brothers' hearts with joy. They talked of their home-going, how they would build a new house by the little river outside their village, how happy their old mother would be and how they would provide her with several courses and a good soup at every meal. They were so delighted with thoughts of a happy future that they could hardly close their eyes at night.

On the day they set out for home they took some precautions against robbers discovering the treasure they were carrying on the way. They filled their sack of gold on top with live eels to camouflage it. They also sewed a layer of oxhide over the sack opening. With the help of a round bamboo pole the brothers carried the heavy sack between them and set out along a small path winding through mountain forests.

A burning sun made the forest steam with blue vapour. Even little birds felt too exhausted to fly far in the heat but settled down to rest on the trees. The brothers made their way uphill slowly, groping at wild grass and weeds and sometimes crawling on all fours. Their skin peeled under the dry sun and sores appeared in Little Togada's mouth so that he lost even the strength to crawl along. Big Togada made frequent trips to the stream to fetch cool spring water for his brother, and only in this way did they manage to reach the top. On the other side of the mountain at the foot of the slope was a tiny bamboo hut inhabited by an elderly couple who cultivated a small plot of land on the hillside. They were so poor that they possessed not even an earthen water jug.

The sun was sinking in the west when the brothers at last crossed the mountain. They made their way to the bamboo hut and begged the old couple to take them in for the night. "Ah, you little birds tired from flight," said the

old woman, smiling. "Stay and rest a night in our small hut." But her husband checked her hospitable words. "Stupid," he said. "Have you thought how much fuel they'll cost us this night?"

The brothers made repeated signs of obeisance until at last the old man agreed to let them stay by his hearth.

In the night Little Togada began tossing and moaning and his body burned with a high fever. Big Togada fed him cold water and prayed to the god of death to spare him. By the time the sun rose again neither of the brothers had slept a wink. Big Togada wept sadly over his suffering brother and was afraid Little Togada might die before they got home. He decided it would be best to carry him home quickly so that he could at least see their mother once more before he died even if it meant leaving the sack of gold behind. His mind made up, he took out a piece of gold about three taels in weight from the sack, put this in his pocket and sewed the sack up again.

"O kind-hearted host and hostess," he said to the old couple. "You have been as good to us as our parents. My brother has suddenly taken seriously ill and I must carry him home at once. We have with us a sack of eels meant for worshipping the god of rain. Please do not touch it but let us leave it here in your attic. I shall return after five days to fetch it." The old man took pity on them and agreed to Big Togada's request. The young man bowed his thanks and went off, carrying his brother on his back.

After four days at home, Little Togada recovered. He and his brother came back to the old couple's bamboo hut. They presented the candles they brought from home to the old man and apologized for troubling him. The old man led them to where the sack was kept and left them with a smile.

The Togada brothers brushed the dust off their sack and picked it up to go. Only then did they discover it was much lighter than before. Big Togada gave a cry of alarm. He put his hand into the torn sack and found nothing but a few dried eels. The brothers went to their host and said, "O kind-hearted host, where have you hidden our gold?"

"To whom did you entrust your gold?" cried the old man. "When you left you said clearly that it was a sack of eels for worshipping the god of rain." The two parties began to argue heatedly and in the end the Togada brothers brought the old couple before the king.

Both parties gave their side of the story to the king and this strange case of the lost gold puzzled even the wise and shrewd King Chaohela. He did not know how to judge the case so he told his guards to take both parties inside and give them meat and wine. They were told to eat and drink at peace for the king would announce his verdict the next day when the sun cast its shadows on the centre pillar of the palace. The Togada brothers were not reassured. They were so worried about their gold that they had no appetite for food. The old couple on the other hand made many signs to show their gratitude and praised the king for being a wise and fair monarch. They ate the meat and drank the wine cheerfully and then went to sleep.

At the crack of dawn a golden bugle call rang out in the palace. A guard came and brought the four before the king.

"I have found in your case that both parties are in the wrong," said King Chaohela. "As a punishment I order you to carry my big drums and take a turn in the dark forest." This being the king's order both parties had to obey. The guards brought out two big, heavy drums. The brothers shouldered one between them and the old couple shouldered the other; they set out along the route pointed out by the king and headed for the dark, dense forest.

Under the weight of the big, heavy drum, the old couple panted and sighed. When they started going uphill, the old woman began to grumble and berate her husband. "The white ants must have been gnawing at your heart, old man, that you dare to steal other people's gold."

"Do you know how much food all that gold will buy us, you stupid," he retorted.

Already tired and exasperated from the heavy burden on her shoulders, the old woman now became very angry.

She put the drum down and cried, "You wouldn't even tell me where you've hidden the gold, but when it comes to carrying this wretched drum I have to suffer with you. I'll not carry it one step further."

"Don't make so much noise," the old man hurried to placate her. "We've lived together twenty years and I've never kept anything from you. I buried the gold under that old tea tree with the three-forked branch. Now let's take the drum back and I promise I'll let you keep half of the gold."

Reassured, the old woman picked up the drum and they continued on their way. When they paused to rest again in a dark grove, they heard two men sighing near by.

"Brother, I'm afraid we are born out of luck. A luscious cake was practically in our mouth and we let it fly away."

"Please forgive me brother, it was all because of my wretched fever. Otherwise we'd never have left the gold in the hands of that wicked couple."

"Everyone says the king is most wise and shrewd and that he is as sharp as a hawk. It seems to me he's only a tiny pheasant unable to fly high. Instead of finding our gold for us, he punishes us by making us carry this stupid, heavy drum. It's ridiculous."

The old man hurriedly covered his wife's mouth and whispered, "Don't make a sound. Those are the brothers who lost the gold. Let's keep out of their way."

The sun's shadow crept up the palace pillar with its carved peacocks. The king had the guards bring in both parties and the drums. "I give you a last chance to be honest," he told them. "I will punish whoever is dishonest by having five of his fingers chopped off." He turned to the Togada brothers first. "Have you really lost a sack of gold?"

"Believe us, O King, we have really lost a sack of gold."

Then the king turned to the old couple. "Have you stolen their sack of gold?"

"We never saw any gold, O King. If you discover that we stole the gold we are willing to have ten fingers chopped off."

"Good," said the king. "Now we will see which of you have been lying." He told the guards to open the two big drums. Forthwith two clerks with paper and pen stepped out of the drums to present a record of what they had heard on the way for the king to read.

As soon as the old couple saw a man come out of the drum they had carried round in the forest they fainted in fright.

The king read the records, sent men to the old tea tree with the three-forked branch and unearthed the buried gold. The Togada brothers got back their gold and the guards were ordered to chop off five of the old man's fingers. From then on, the wisdom and shrewdness of King Chaohela became known throughout the region.

*Translated by Tang Sheng*

## Tolanga, God of Pictures

(TAI)

In a Mongpanasi village nestling amidst coconut palms, a tiny bamboo hut rocked in the wind by the turbulent Sawongla River. Here, under the window, Tolanga sat every day, his eyes fixed on the birds flying past and the ever-changing clouds in the sky.

On days when all the villagers went to the temple to worship the gods, Tolanga went too. But in the noisy, merry temple where cymbals crashed and drums beat, instead of praying or sprinkling water to show his respect to the gods he spent his time watching the faces of the people milling in and out. The sound of praying came to an end, the crowd gradually dispersed and the candles were extinguished. Tolanga, wrapped in a plaid cotton rug singing and laughing, returned to his bamboo hut rocking in the wind and sketched the faces he had seen during the day on large flower petals and bamboo leaves he gathered. He worked for seven days and nights and each day drew seven different faces. He then traced these forty-nine different faces on soft paper, on homespun cotton and coloured silk and sold them to those who came to worship the gods. With the proceeds from these sales he bought food and other necessities for himself so that his life became better and better. He never spent a single day without his paint brush. Ten years went by in the midst of wind and rain until he had painted so many pictures that they filled his whole hut.

One dark windy night a person, in a black cotton rug, his head tied in black kerchief, walked up to the rocking bamboo hut to knock lightly at Tolanga's door.

Tolanga laid aside his paint brush. Moistening one finger, he flicked the wick of the oil lamp to make it burn brighter. "Who's there?" he asked. "It's so late at night that even the owls have gone to rest in the woods. What do you want from me?"

The dark shadow outside the door said, "I'm the messenger of Bayin,\* I'm the god of death in charge of all souls in Mongpanasi."

Tolanga began to tremble with fright. He wrapped his rug tighter, adjusted his head kerchief and went to open the door. Black as a ball of coal, the god of death followed him into the hut. At first Tolanga was sorry that he had let the creature get so near him but he picked up his paint brush without showing a sign of fear. Calmly, he continued with the face of the young girl he was painting.

The god of death saw that he seemed quite unaware of his presence so he urged, "Let's go. Our Bayin is waiting for you."

Tolanga hesitated a minute, his paint brush pausing in the air. "I beg you to inform the Heavenly God that I must finish this most beautiful face on earth before I come."

\*Bayin is what the Tai people call the King of Heaven.



"That's impossible. My orders come from Bayin." The god of death came nearer Tolanga's little bamboo desk. However, the sight of Tolanga's unfinished picture made him catch his breath in awe. He kept his eyes on the beautiful face as he murmured words of praise. Tolanga, hands trembling slightly, traced the fine features of the beautiful face stroke by stroke. Since the god of death wanted very much to see the finished picture of this great beauty, he decided to leave Tolanga for the time being and stole back to Heaven.

"Has Tolanga come?"

"O Bayin, he is at work on the most beautiful face on earth. I haven't the heart to take him away."

The King of Heaven flushed crimson. Blue veins stood out on his neck. "You must bring him here before the stars fade from the sky," he roared in great rage.

The god of death again alighted in a stretch of woods. Following the thick coconut grove, he made his way to the brightly lit bamboo hut. He opened the door, walked up to Tolanga, put his mouth close to his ear and told him what the King of Heaven said. All this time he gazed at the face in the picture.

Tolanga very calmly put in the last strokes on his picture before he hurriedly packed a number of his paintings. Taking along also a pair of candles, he followed the god of death to Heaven. At the feet of the King of Heaven he knelt down, a lighted candle in the left hand and his roll of paintings in his right. The King of Heaven smiled at him. "I know you are a famous painter on earth and have painted so many faces that you know them all well. Now you will remain here with us to be the god of pictures."

Tolanga's tears streamed down on his paintings but he managed to curb his sobbing. Thanking the King of Heaven, he blew out the candle and followed the god of death. He was taken to the god of birth by whose side he took a seat. From then on whenever the god of birth sent a new life to earth, Tolanga would pick out at random a picture from among his stack of paintings — some on soft

paper, some on homespun cotton and some on coloured silk — to be the face of the new soul. However, Tolanga himself was so bewitched by that beautiful face he had painted on silk that he never produced it for any newborn. That is why up till today, expectant mothers of the Tai people still go to worship the god Tolanga with fresh flowers and pray that he bless their unborn child with the most beautiful face in the world.

*Translated by Tang Sheng  
Illustration by Jen Chih-yu*

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There was a man in the state of Chi who wanted some gold. One morning he dressed himself smartly and went to the market. Arrived at the gold-dealer's stall, he seized a piece of gold and made off.

The officer who caught him asked him: "Why did you steal gold in front of so many people?"

"When I took the gold," he answered, "I saw nobody. All I saw was the gold."

**Lieh Tzu**  
(7-5th century B.C. philosopher)

## Meng Erh the Dreamer

(HAN)

Meng Erh was a poor young man who worked for the landlord all the year round.

One day when Spring Festival was near at hand, the landlord went to the market to buy things for the festival. He bought a number of lovely and colourful New-Year pictures on various themes too. His eldest daughter-in-law chose one with a carp and a fat baby which symbolized *Wealth, Honour and Abundance*. The second daughter-in-law picked a *God of Wealth Brings Fortune*. The third daughter-in-law took *The Unicorn Brings a Son*, while his daughters chose *The Nine Fairies* and *The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid*. Each hung her picture in her own room.

Meng Erh, who had been watching, found a torn piece of paper on the floor and picked it up. It was a picture of a cabbage with a green cricket on it. Since no one else wanted it, he pasted it on a wall in the servants' quarters.

The Lantern Festival arrived soon after the Spring Festival. Then it was time to start working in the fields again. Before one realized, it was the third month of the year. One day Meng Erh suddenly discovered that something queer had happened to the picture. The green cricket which had been on the leaf had gone underneath it! Meng Erh was surprised. He remembered clearly that the green cricket had been perching on top. How strange!

Two days later he discovered that the cricket was back on the leaf again. He began to watch it every day and

finally discovered that the green cricket went under the leaf for shelter on rainy days, but when the weather was fine it rested on the leaf to sun itself. So every day Meng Erh looked at the picture to find out whether the weather would be fine or rainy. Sometimes on a clear day he would take his straw hat and straw rain-cloak with him to work. But on some overcast days when everyone else prepared for rain he would take nothing, and the sky would soon clear up.

People began going to Meng Erh to ask about the weather. Whatever he told them invariably turned out to be right.

One day when Meng Erh was out grazing his horse he saw a pig and four piglets with white hoofs sleeping in the grass. Whose pig and piglets were these, he wondered. He forgot all about it when he went home. Two days later, when he learned that someone was looking for his lost pig, Meng Erh told him the place to look for it and its four piglets with white hoofs. The pig and her piglets were found at the place he indicated.

People were surprised. When they asked Meng Erh how he knew the whereabouts of the pig he told them that he happened to see it there. But he did not tell them the truth when he was asked how he could foretell the weather. "I dreamed about it," was all he would say.

The news that Meng Erh could dream things spread. And so he got the name Meng Erh the Dreamer.

Once when Meng Erh was gathering mushrooms in the woods he spotted a horse. Not knowing whose horse it was he tied it to a tree in case it should run away. When he learned that someone was looking for a lost horse, he told him to look for it in the woods where it was tied to a tree. And the owner did find the horse there. So Meng Erh's name spread to the whole county.

One day the county magistrate lost his seal. This caused a great commotion. An official losing his seal was a serious matter! The news soon spread to every household in the county. Then someone suggested to the magistrate to consult Meng Erh the Dreamer who could dream about things. The magistrate was at his wit's end. As the saying goes,

"When one's really troubled by an illness one would go to any doctor recommended," so he sent two of his men, Chang the Third and Li the Fourth to ask Meng Erh over.

Meng Erh was horrified. "Misfortune has befallen me. I won't be able to know who has taken the seal even if I give my life. How can I dream about it?" thought he. He was so frightened that he was unable to utter a word.

At last he hit upon a plan. "Will you set fire to a stack of firewood after we have gone for about two *li*?" he said to the hired hands who worked with him. "When we see a fire in the village we can come back to help to put it out. In this way I might get out of going to the magistrate." They promised to help him.

"Aiya, my village is on fire." Meng Erh suddenly shouted after they had gone about two *li*. Chang the Third and Li the Fourth had to come back with him. To their surprise there was really a fire. When the fire was put out they took Meng Erh on the way again. So there was no way out for poor Meng Erh.

Meng Erh was very worried that he would be beaten by the magistrate if he should fail to dream of the seal. He said nothing all the way. The magistrate's men were worried too. "How did he know that there was a fire in the village when we had already gone about two *li*? Does he really know everything? Maybe he already knows who had stolen the seal."

"Let's try him out," one of them suggested.

"Mr. Dreamer. Who do you think has stolen the seal?" they asked.

Meng Erh was put into a difficult situation. What could he say?

"Some Chang the Third or Li the Fourth,"\* he answered at random.

As soon as he said this the two men immediately dropped down on their knees in front of him. . . . Their heads were covered with cold sweat and they were shivering all over.

\*Equivalent to "some Tom, Dick or Harry."

"Have mercy on us, Mr. Dreamer," they kowtowed incessantly. "We'll never do that again."

"So it's stolen by you! I just happened to mention these two names."

"Don't be sarcastic, living god. We will give you the seal. Please do not say that we have taken it. It is under a stone slab in the garden." They again kowtowed.

Meng Erh the Dreamer was treated to a feast in the *yamen*. Soon it was reported that the room for Meng Erh to have dreams was ready.

So he had to go into the room. But he came out presently after he had lain on the bed for a little while.

"How is it? Have you dreamed about it?" asked the magistrate.

"Sure," laughed Meng Erh, "it's under the stone slab in your garden."

Chang the Third and Li the Fourth were sent to fetch it. They did so without any difficulty.

The magistrate was very pleased and gave Meng Erh fifty taels of silver for reward. But from that day on, the magistrate began to feel uneasy. He was worried that if Meng Erh kept on dreaming about things he would dream about all the bad deeds he had done. He remembered that he had received a bribe of three hundred taels of silver on a murder case. And for five hundred taels of silver he allowed a certain landlord to infringe on a piece of land. And another time a merchant who had taken someone's wife gave him two hundred taels. What's more he had embezzled the taxes collected from the people for repairing the river banks. . . . What would happen if Meng Erh dreamed about all these. . . . So he had another five hundred taels of silver sent to Meng Erh and told him not to dream any more, not even in his sleep.

The magistrate's wife was also worried. "If he dreams about my affair with the *yamen* secretary and tells the magistrate about it, my life will be forfeit," she thought.

She pondered for half a night and at last decided to send a pair of golden bracelets to Meng Erh and ask him not to tell anybody if he happened to dream about her affairs.



The secretary was even more worried. He was afraid that he might lose his post and be humiliated and that the magistrate's wife should stop coming to him. Much as he hated to do it, he sold some of his personal belongings and raised two hundred taels of silver which he sent to Meng Erh asking him not to dream about him.

"I know all about your affairs without dreaming," laughed Meng Erh. "What do I need your dirty silver for? All I want is that you will leave me alone and do not ask me to dream for you any more."

*Translated by Yu Fan-chin  
Illustration by Hung Lin*

MAN JUI

## The Worker's Village

At dusk, wind howls, snow falls,  
In the vast forest  
Hills are shivering,  
Trees are gnashing their teeth. . . .

For hundreds of miles around  
All is swallowed up in icy cold;  
Only at the foot of the hills,  
Where the woodcutters have their homes,  
Lamps are flickering amidst white smoke rising from  
chimneys,  
Like an expanse of white lotus in full bloom. . . .

*Translated by Gladys Yang*



## Notes on Literature and Art

YUAN PO

### The Yunnan Minority Peoples' Literature

Yunnan, in southwest China, is a province where many minority peoples live together in the mist of picturesque beauty. Some twenty nationalities, including the industrious, courageous, song-and-dance-loving Pai, Chuang, Yi, Tai, Tibetan, Hani, Kawa, Chingpo, Lisu, and Nasi peoples, inhabit this area stretching from the turbulent Golden Sand (Chinsha) River to the quiet Juili River. At one extreme silvery light gleams on mountains snow-capped all the year round, while at the other green palms sway under a sub-tropical sun.

Economically, the development of these minority peoples is very uneven. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, some of them had entered the stage of a well developed feudal landlord economy, others were serfs, still others lived in slavery. Under these circumstances, it was only natural that here age-old mythology and legends were preserved intact. Most of these, however, were not recorded in writing but were kept alive by word of mouth. They are extremely varied and rich in content.

The Yunnan minority peoples have often been called poetical peoples and Yunnan itself has sometimes been praised as an ocean of lyrics and the homeland of mythology. Each of the minority peoples has its own literary traditions, and poems

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Yuan Po, poet, is vice-chairman of the Yunnan Federation of Writers and Artists.

and songs play important parts in their lives. They use poems and songs for narration, to express their feelings, to popularize the methods of production, to record their national histories and movements and to praise their heroes.

After the birth of the new China, the people's government did much to help the various minority peoples develop their own art and literature and to develop their own writers and cultural workers. Writers and artists of Han nationality were sent to help them collect, arrange and study their literary heritage—the foundation on which new national literatures are to be created and developed. It was in this way that many fine works of art and literature of our minority peoples, formerly overlooked, discriminated against and considered too crude to be of value for hundreds and thousands of years, were discovered. Their traditional literary works, brought to light through compilation and translation, are startlingly colourful and rich. Among these are long epic poems, some amounting to five or seven thousand lines.

*Meiko*, a poem of the Yi people and the *Ahsi's Songs*, a poem of the Ahsi, a branch of the Yi, belong to this category. Both poems are characterized by a strong mythical flavour and deal with a wide range of subjects. They include verses describing the origin of different substances in the universe and the calamities man encountered in his early life as well as customs and habits. These customs and habits reflect primitive man's reaction to ever-changing natural phenomena and demonstrate his stubborn early attempts to conquer nature. There are also verses whose theme is the affection between man and woman and which show the pure love of the Yi people. Both poems depict in detail man's activities in production and his joys and pains in labour. They can be said to be both literature and history.

Another kind are long narrative poems with fully developed plots and lively characterization such as *Ashma* and *Escape to a Land of Honey*, of the Shani, another branch of the Yi people; *Ngo-ping* and *Sang-lo*, *Chaushutun*, *The Gourd Letter* . . . of the Tai people; *Lupalujao* of the Nasi people; and *The Red Boat* of the Miao people.

*Ashma* is a narrative poem of nearly two thousand lines. The poem depicts two steadfast and courageous young people—Ashma and Ahay. Their struggle against dark evil forces that stand in their way to happiness shows the Shani peo-

ple's thirst for a better life. This long poem is extremely popular among the Shani. The characters, Ashma and Ahay, have a special place in their hearts and Shani people often sing this moving tale, shedding tears for the sufferings of Ashma and rejoicing over her victories. The young people of Shani take particular pride in the heroic figures of Ahay and Ashma.

The beautiful and moving narrative poem, *Ngo-ping and Sang-lo*, is a tragic love-story of revolt against feudalism. It is popular in the areas inhabited by the Tai people in Yunnan. Boldly exposing the feudal family system as represented by Sang-lo's mother and the evils of arbitrarily arranged old-fashioned marriages, the poem praises the young rebels who give their lives for true love and freedom and who represent the people's opposition to the feudal system.

Besides the narrative and epic poems, the minority peoples also have many popular rhymes depicting every aspect of life. These have an even broader mass basis, reflecting more directly the class struggle; some of them have attained a fairly high level of artistry. Folk tales and fables, too, occupy an important place in the literary heritage of the minority peoples.

Since 1958, systematic study and research into the minority peoples' literature has proceeded further. Several selections of outstanding literary works have been compiled and concise histories of literature written for several of the minority peoples. All this has contributed towards a better understanding of the literary traditions of the minority peoples and will have important bearings on the development of our new socialist national literatures. Inheriting the best of old traditions and further developing them must be considered as a unity. To develop without inheriting from the old would leave us without a foundation, but to carry on traditions without further development would be purposeless.

In the past ten years, the Yunnan minority peoples have made a step forward in the development of their national literatures by producing a number of new writings. Particularly worthy of mention are the new narrative and lyric poems, *See Peking from the Woods*, *Song of the Shifting Sand River* and *Song of the Tai People*, by the veteran Tai bards, Kang Lang-shuai, Kang Lang-ying and Po Yu-wen, and a novel written in Chinese by the Yi writer, Li Chiao. The development of the minority peoples' new literature is manifest also in

the growth of new young writers among them. For instance, young Niu Hsiang-kuei and Mu Li-chun, of the Nani people, drawing material from the rich legends of their people, have written the long poem *Jade Dragon*; Pu Fei, young Yi writer of peasant origin, has written short stories in Chinese.

*See Peking from the Woods*, a collection of poems singing of the new life, is a first volume from the new Tai literature born after the founding of New China. Using simple but vivid language, the poems have a strong lyric folk quality. Kang Lang-shuai, the poet, was born forty years ago in a poor peasant family in Hsishuangpanna. Following the Tai people's custom, he was sent into a monastery as a novice at the tender age of seven. There he learned to read and write in the Tai language and in the course of reading Tai scriptures and books took a great fancy to folk poems and songs. After serving as a monk for eleven years, he returned home where he began to compose new songs and poems drawing from his own experience in life and from folk legends. His songs were highly praised and he eventually won the title of "Best Bard of Hsishuangpanna." Soon after liberation he was elected a council member of the Chinese Folk Literature and Arts Research Institute. In 1958, when he came to Peking for the All-China Congress for Workers in Folk Literature, one of his fondest dreams came true. Together with the other delegates to the Congress, he met Mao Tse-tung whom he longed to see for many years. Recently, to greet China's tenth anniversary, he composed a long poem of two thousand lines depicting the great changes in the lives of the Tai people in the past ten years.

*Song of the Shifting Sand River* is a recent work of another veteran Tai bard, Kang Lang-ying. He was born in a poor peasant family in 1906. Like the other bard, Kang Lang-shuai, he entered the monastery also at the early age of ten. He returned home at twenty-five and began singing for the people. At the same time he was also forced to entertain local officials with his songs. In those dark days, ground down by poverty and the oppression of the officials, the bard felt little joy in living. Beginning from 1942, his singing voice became silent for many years. After the liberation, inspired by the prosperous new life, his voice was again heard in the *Song of the Shifting Sand River*.

This is a fine narrative poem. Depicting the building of the Shifting Sand River Reservoir, the poet amalgamates an-

## My New Opera

cient legend, history and real life into one charming poem. In vivid and colourful phrases, he gives a true picture of the old and the new times. Under the exploitation of feudal lords, the labouring people could do nothing to tame nature, and the Shifting Sand River brought them calamities and tears. After liberation, the Tai people built a dam over the river and eliminated for ever the sorrow of centuries. Moved by this momentous event, the bard has given birth to this heroic poem.

Another bard well known among the Tai people is Po Yu-wen. Before liberation, he lived a tormented existence under the oppression and exploitation of the ruling class. When New China came into being, he was elected chairman of the Hsishuangpanna Bards' Association. In 1958 he was elected a council member of the Chinese *Chuyi* Association. He composed many short lyric poems in recent years expressing the great love of the Tai people for the Communist Party and the new society.

As a result of the constant cultural contacts between China's many nationalities throughout history, the Han culture has exerted much influence among the minority peoples. The Yi writer Li Chiao learned Chinese as a child, and can write freely in Chinese. After the liberation, he took part in the struggles against the decadent and backward influences, and wrote many short stories depicting the life of the minority peoples. He also wrote a novel, *The Joyful Golden Sand River*. This is a story of how the Chinese People's Liberation Army helped the Liangshan Yi people to overcome the backwardness and poverty fettering them for centuries and how the Yi people marched on to a new road in life. It was well received on publication and the author is now writing a sequel to the novel depicting the democratic reform and construction of socialism in the age-old district of Liangshan.

The appearance of these new literary works marks an important point in the development of the Yunnan minority peoples' literature. They certainly add colour and variety to the socialist literature of our multi-national motherland.

Recently I played in a new Peking opera, *Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command*. When I was young I constantly experimented with new operas. I worked hardest between the age of twenty-four and twenty-five, when in eighteen months I played eleven new roles in operas with modern settings as well as newly-written traditional operas. During the Japanese war I did not perform for eight years, and after liberation I have been so busy reviving my old repertoire that I had no time to put on any new opera. So *Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command* is not only my first attempt at a new opera since liberation but my first new opera in more than twenty years.

During the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127) a famous general at the northern frontier named Yang Chi-yeh became a popular hero on account of his achievements in war. Many legends spread about him and his descendants who defended the country heroically. The heroine of my new opera, Mu Kuei-ying, was the wife of Yang Chi-yeh's grandson, Yang Tsung-pao. The daughter of a brigand chief, she was skilled in the arts of war. During one fight she fell in love with General Yang's grandson, and after they became husband and wife they defended the northern frontier together. During those troubled times she served the Sung dynasty well; but later, slandered by a wicked official, she retired from active service. When about twenty years had passed, the Liao (Khitan) invaded the northern frontier again and the emperor conferred the command of the army on her. To defend the state, she donned armour once more. This opera describes how she goes out again to fight the enemy.

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Mei Lan-fang is a well-known Peking opera actor, who always plays female roles as is the custom with the traditional theatre in his days. He is now director of the Chinese Academy of Peking Opera.

About forty years ago I played the part of Mu Kuei-ying as a girl when she meets her future husband. In *The Mountain Fortress* and *The Defeat of Prince Mu* she is an intelligent, brave and innocent girl, intensely patriotic. I was so fond of this character and played so often in these two operas that I came to feel very close to this heroine. Her role here is that of a woman fighter or *tao-ma-tan*. In Chinese opera, a woman is called a *tan*, but there are many varieties of *tan*. I started by playing the part of a *ching-yi*, then that of a *kuei-men-tan*, *hua-tan* and *tao-ma-tan*. The last role is acrobatic. Perhaps I should give a brief explanation in passing of these four types. 1. Most *ching-yi* were originally married women, plainly dressed to denote their family's poverty. Later, all unfortunate women, whether rich or poor, came to be played by *ching-yi*. 2. *Kuei-men-tan* are the daughters of rich officials. Since such girls were fettered by convention in feudal society and forced to stay inside the house, the actor portraying them had to convey their gentleness and chastity. Both these roles, especially the first, demand a good singing voice. That is why a *tan* usually starts by playing *ching-yi*, for this helps to train the voice. 3. *Hua-tan* are girls from humble homes, serving-maids or courtesans. Their gestures, speech and expressions are relatively uninhibited, clever and ingenuous; their costumes are more colourful, too, for they do not wear long gowns with trailing sleeves. 4. *Tao-ma-tan* are women fighters. On the battle-field they wear armour, boots and a plumed head-dress like other generals; while in hand-to-hand fighting they wear short jackets and trousers, rarely skirts. Their gestures and speech are free and natural, and they have many features in common with *hua-tan*. Since each of these four types has its distinctive style of acting, as soon as a woman appears on the stage the audience can tell to which category she belongs. These distinct types of women did exist in feudal society, and in playing classical drama we must adopt the traditional techniques to reflect the truth about those times correctly.

There are different types in other roles, too, such as old or young men, various kinds of clowns, villains, rough fellows and so on, all of whom have their distinctive modes of expression. This is true of Peking opera as well as of the other local operas. Past exponents of opera drew on their experience of life to invent appropriate gestures and expressions



Mei Lan-fang in his new opera  
*Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command*.

according to the demands of the theatre, employing a form of artistic exaggeration instead of depicting life in a naturalistic manner. For example, in a feast on the stage there are wine cups but no dishes; after the host and guest have taken seats they raise their cups and go through the motions of drinking to a special musical accompaniment, and then the feast is

over. Of course entertaining guests in real life is not so simple. Still, in an opera the feast itself is not the main thing. If we made it true to life in every detail with abundant food to be eaten, this would spoil the dramatic effect and waste much time. The drama should unfold quickly and concisely, passing rapidly over unimportant episodes while giving full scope to those where emphasis is needed. There should not be a single unnecessary character or incident. The actors should not make a single meaningless gesture. Only so can the audience grasp the main idea and become enthralled.

I remember an amusing experience I had when first playing Mu Kuei-ying in *The Mountain Fortress*. The audience, aware that I was taking the part of a woman fighter for the first time, were intrigued and kept cheering to encourage me. But after the performance some connoisseurs pointed out frankly that I had made the mistake of keeping my head lowered, which detracted from the heroine's dignity. I explained to them: "Though I have practised acrobatics for several years, this is the first time I have played in armour. The four flags behind the head are quite a weight; so unconsciously I kept lowering my head and looking at the ground, which must have appeared undignified. Now that the fault has been pointed out, of course I shall correct it in my next performance, but I hope you will remind me of it as occasion arises." They agreed, next time

this happened, to clap gently to arouse my attention. So when next I played this role and made the same mistake, I heard gentle applause and knew that this meant disapproval, not approval. This served to remind me, and I promptly raised my head. This happened several times. If I have made some progress in my art in all these years, I owe much of it to those friends among the audience who held up a mirror for my faults.

Since I knew the character of Mu Kuei-ying, the woman general, it might have been thought that I should find little difficulty in this new opera. But this was not quite the case. In the past I portrayed her as a young woman. In this new opera, however, since Mu Kuei-ying is growing old and is in low spirits, she should make her first appearance as a *ching-yi*. This was a new departure for me—to depict two different types in one role.

There are eight scenes in *Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command*. The fifth, "Accepting the Command," is the climax. This scene is packed with movement, expressive gestures and singing, as well as considerable mental conflict. Perhaps I should say something about the heroine's different states of mind as the story unfolds. Since the Liaos are attacking the frontier, Mu Kuei-ying in her retirement is worried and sends her children to the capital to find out the position, waiting anxiously for their return. At her first entry she declaims four lines of verse showing her fear lest evil ministers should harm her children and her hopes for their speedy return. This first phase shows her uneasiness. Then her children come back to tell her that her son in a tournament has fought and killed the son of the wicked official Wang Chiang and been given a commander's seal. The emperor orders Mu Kuei-ying to assume command. This seal recalls the unhappy past and makes her sad; she reproaches her son Wen-kuang for his rashness and wants to take him in chains to the emperor, begging permission to return the seal. This second phase reveals her anger. When her grandmother appears and asks why she is unwilling to lead the army, she sings at some length explaining that the emperor has always listened to slanderers and forgotten the achievements of the Yang family generals, remembering them only when there is trouble at the frontier; hence she is indignant and wants the emperor to find other helpers. This

stage shows her resentment. But she lets her grandmother persuade her to accept the command, and as she is preparing to put on martial dress the sound of drums and troops gathering stirs her blood so that she is ready to fight the foe as before. She sings at a quickened tempo, showing her confidence. This new stage indicates her determination.

Such was the opera originally. But after several rehearsals I felt the change was too sudden from her initial unwillingness to her acceptance and immediate exultation at the sound of drums. There seemed some emotional immaturity here, and something lacking in the dramatic effect in this rather abrupt transition. It struck me that when such a great responsibility fell to one who after all had not fought for more than twenty years, there must be a certain mental conflict—some additions were necessary here. So I took the liberty of making her deliberate with herself after she decides to take command but realizes what a hard task this is. Since this mental conflict must be concluded swiftly in order not to weaken the dramatic climax, I also decided to make bold use of a traditional form of musical accompaniment—an intermixture of loud and muted gonging—during which the heroine does not sing but simply shows by dancing movements that she is reflecting deeply. This type of accompaniment is generally used in scenes just before a battle when generals are thinking out their plan of campaign; the louder and lower sounds suggest their mental conflict. This device has seldom been used apart from battle scenes, and certainly never for a *ching-yi*.

In this section I sing four lines only. The first two lines show that Mu Kuei-ying has decided to assume command, the next two conclude the conflict in her mind. After the third line, "For twenty years I have laid aside my armour and joined no battle," there is miming without singing. I spread my sleeves and march from one side to another with a bold stride seldom used by women on the stage. I make gestures as if fighting, then go through the motions of looking at the mirror, suggesting that Mu Kuei-ying is old and a warrior no more. I then walk back, pointing at both sides to indicate that the troops have diminished and the heroine has no able officers left. Stirring music at this point symbolizes the heroine's patriotism; but still she cannot set her mind at rest. At last I give an exclamation and sing the fourth line: "Have I no love for my country and my people that I will not fight for

them?" Mu Kuei-ying is urging herself to refrain from undue anxiety, but to go out like a loyal soldier to fight the enemy. I add this deliberation to give the audience a sense of the coming battle and help to build up to the climax. Then, my hands behind me, I turn my back to the stage; but when drums sound I wheel around with every sign of assurance, as if Mu Kuei-ying has recaptured her youth. And confidently holding the commander's seal, I sing: "Who can assume command if I refuse? Who can lead the troops if not I?" So I make a heroic exit.

Some of those who watched my performance commented that my pose when holding the commander's seal produced a strong sculptural effect. I attribute this partly to the fact that I love art and learned to paint when young. The year before last when I went to perform in Loyang, I visited the famous Lungmen grottoes where innumerable Buddhist images are cut on the hillside. Especially noteworthy are the great Buddhas at Fenghsien Monastery, one of which measures several hundreds of feet in height. These exquisitely carved yet dignified sculptures are a rare sight. Last year again, when I performed in Taiyuan, I visited the famous Tsin Temple and saw the images of women attendants beside the Holy Mother made by Sung dynasty artists. All these figures are holding something, some are smiling, some are frowning; they



Mei Lan-fang at home teaching his daughter, Pao-yueh, dancing gestures.

combine beauty with realism, yet no two are alike. I lingered there enchanted for a long time, unable to tear myself away. Such treasures of art, constantly seen and remembered, help an actor greatly by enriching his experience. As a child, I loved

an opera called *Green Stone Mountain*, in one scene of which Lord Kuan, a hero of the Three Kingdoms period, is seated while his son attends him holding his seal. This magnificent scene made much the same strong impression on me as the sculptures of Buddhist saints. Hence my attitude in holding the seal in this opera was based unconsciously on those past impressions, though I did not deliberately imitate any single gesture. We know that all forms of art should absorb nourishment from every side, but we must bear in mind the principle of taking over the spirit and not merely copying the form. If we borrow in a mechanical or dogmatic manner, we cannot create true art.

*Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command* comes from the repertoire of Honan opera. I was most interested when I saw this four years ago, for though I have been a friend of this heroine for forty years, I did not know this story of her assumption of command in later life. I was much impressed by her ever-youthful and heroic spirit, feeling a close affinity to her. That is why this year I transplanted this flower to the Peking opera stage.

We have now more than three hundred kinds of local opera in China, and we have discovered over fifty thousand old plays. It is always possible to transplant a drama from one school of opera to another, but each school has its own distinctive style and when adapting a play we must not forget this. Thus my *Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command* is somewhat different from the Honan version because we have tried to retain our Peking opera style. This is being done by all the local operas, and we are confident that by skilful transplanting and the creation of many new plays we can make a hundred flowers blossom and have new blooms emerging ceaselessly to supersede the old.

## A Reminiscence of Chi Pai-shih

Chi Pai-shih when  
he was ninety-  
five years old.



Twenty years ago when I was in that mountain city, Chungking, the late Hsu Pei-hung organized an exhibition of the paintings of modern artists. The instant I entered the hall, I was attracted by an ink sketch of orchids by Chi Pai-shih. In spite of its small size, the orchids were so fresh and real that I was captivated. It was during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, a time of trial and tribulations for our country, but I saw in the picture the righteous spirit of the Chinese nation and her stubborn will for life. After that I had an even greater respect for the old man's art and deemed it an honour to live in his time.

A few years later, when I returned to Peking from the south, Chi Pai-shih had already passed his eightieth birthday. One summer day I visited him, taking along some two score of my paintings. I was impressed by his lively face and white hair,

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Li Ko-jan, well-known Chinese landscape painter, is a professor in the Central Institute of Fine Arts. One of his recent articles *On Landscape Painting* appeared in *Chinese Literature* No. 8, 1959.

his simple, easy manners as he sat reclining on a rattan chair. There was not a trace in him of the arrogance or complacency sometimes adopted by great artists. He looked over my paintings carefully, examined some more than once, and finally turned to me: "Get them printed, I'll write the preface. If you have no money, I'll pay the expenses." It was a day I'll never forget. From that moment onwards, the old man accepted me as one of his pupils.

There is an old saying in China that "A painting is like its artist." My teacher Chi Pai-shih was one of the simplest and yet strongest men I ever knew. He was not fond of talking or social gatherings, and disliked publicity about himself.

One evening, he told me that pine wood is very good for illumination and that in his younger days he used to read and paint under a pine torch. In his eightieth year, when a friend asked him to write his biography, he described his life of eighty years with a scant thousand words or so. He wrote: "I studied with my grandfather at the age of eight. I was fond of painting and began by drawing a fisherman on half a piece of paper torn off my writing pad. Though grandfather scolded me, I could not stop. One day, my grandmother said, 'No one has ever been able to cook essays and make a meal of them. What will you do when there's no more rice tomorrow? It's a pity that you were born in the wrong kind of family.' After that I hung my classics on the horns of a buffalo and went to gather faggots daily. . . ."

Later, Chi Pai-shih worked as a carpenter for fifteen years. It was not until he was twenty-seven and came into contact with the local man of letters and painter that he got help in his study of poems, writing and painting. After he reached forty he went on five long trips, travelling across all the famous mountains and rivers of China. When he turned fifty, he took up his residence in Peking and made a living by carving name seals and selling his pictures. This old man, who had gone through so many momentous changes gradually became known both at home and abroad as a master painter. But even in his later years, he continued to lead an extremely simple and frugal life. He got up early every morning. To prevent people from disturbing him, he often locked his front gate and in his absorption in work knew no fatigue. He gave his whole life to art. In one of the poems about himself, he wrote:

What use are officialdom and glory?  
 Carving insects till old, I mind not the toil.  
 Engraving a seal in the long night, the hours pass quickly,  
 Rising to take up paint brush is better than serving  
 at court.

In his later years, he liked to recite a line written by someone on the plum blossoms he painted, "The man of eighty has a heart firm as steel." Once, after reciting this repeatedly he turned to me saying, "It is important to have a heart firm as steel, eh?" When I look back over the life of my teacher, I seem to see again this old man with the heart firm as steel. His thin angular frame stands erect before my eyes. On the road of life and of art, he always went straight ahead looking neither right nor left, and never lost heart.

In his lifetime of close to a hundred years, Chi Pai-shih lived through the most disturbed century in the history of China. Born under the declining Ching monarchy, he suffered in the time of decadent and reactionary rule. It was only in his last years that he was able to enjoy life in the people's era. But the wonderful thing about him was that he kept a genuine and childlike heart till the very last and this youthful spirit still pervades his artistic works. Chi Pai-shih was a very straightforward and affectionate person. Sometimes, when talking to a friend, he would be stirred till tears filled his eyes. One of his diary entries reads, "I cannot help shedding tears when I recall my grandfather though I am eighty years old." Once, recollecting his childhood, he painted some bamboos with the following poem inscribed:

As a child I cut bamboos for playthings,  
 I recall still the curves of the path behind the house.  
 Now old and getting on to my sixtieth year, to me,  
 Riding a bamboo horse seems a thing but of yesterday.

All his life Chi Pai-shih loved the things round him with a childlike fervour. He once gave me a picture: two sprigs of orchid in a glass with the flowers facing each other and the inscription, "A Conversation." Indeed, the painting conveyed the impression of "smiling at each other as they whisper." In painting chicks, he not only depicted their fluffy feathers but portrayed the youthful energy of the little creatures.

Once he painted two mischievous chicks fighting and tugging at an earthworm in their beaks with the inscription: "Future

Helpmates." Some people wondered at the meaning of these words. The old man was in fact referring to the ancient belief that chickens are gregarious creatures who call to each other when one of them finds food. Now these two chicks were fighting over a worm, so with loving tolerance and understanding, the old man wrote the inscription, meaning to say that some day they would understand how to help each other. He might have been talking to two naughty kiddies.

The figures, flowers, birds, fish, insects produced by his paint brush all portray his deep feelings. He once painted some pumpkins and wrote the following words: "The southerners call this *nan kua* (southern squash). It is sweet and delectable. In good years it serves well as a vegetable dish; in famine years it can be a substitute for grain. Don't forget to plant some in spring!" It was in this way that he showed his concern for working people in their days of hardship and privations.

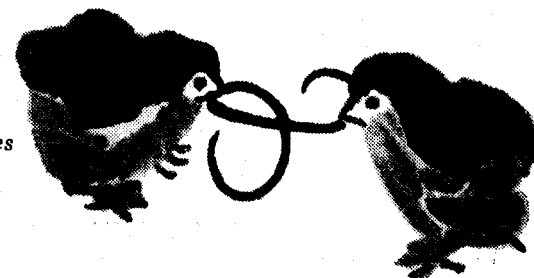
I remember one evening in the depth of winter when the old master discussed poetry with me. He mentioned a verse by some poet about cotton with these lines:

When it flowers the world is warm,  
 When it fades the world is cold.

Then he told me, "The writer of this verse cared about the welfare of the people, he was qualified to be a minister."

他  
 白日  
 相呼

Future Helpmates



As Chi Pai-shih grew old, his love for humanity increased. After he reached the age of ninety, when friends or young students came to visit he was always loath to say good-bye and would see them all the way to the front gate, lingering there until they disappeared from sight. Even in his last two years, when he was weighed down by age and sometimes not too clear in his mind, his works still portrayed his strong feelings for life. The *Begonias* (see p. 148 of this issue) painted in his ninety-sixth year is a picture of crimson beauty and radiant with life. No one could detect the least bit of detachment or decadence in this picture.

I was extremely surprised the first time I watched Chi Pai-shih paint. He had the habit of inscribing on his paintings, "Scrawled at random by Pai-shih." This sometimes led people to believe that great painters just twirl their brush and the picture is done, which is far from the fact. Usually when he promised someone to do a painting, he would recline in his chair deep in thought with his eyes closed. Sometimes, he traced shapes on his knees with a finger before going to meditate and survey the piece of paper spread out for the painting.

In writing too he had the same habit. For instance, when someone asked him to write a few characters, he would fold and refold a piece of paper, observing and thinking over it for a long time before he picked up his pen. At times, half-way through writing a scroll, he would take a bamboo ruler from his brush-holder to measure the paper this way and that until I, holding the paper in place for him, would feel my patience sorely tried. But when his paintings or calligraphy were hung, I would see that the care he took was not in vain, for they radiated the utmost brilliance and wisdom.

The way the master worked gave me the greatest inspiration. I used to think that impressionist pictures were meant to convey a certain spirit and that the brush should be wielded quickly. But I noticed that Chi Pai-shih used his brush with the greatest discretion, steadily and slowly. Every single stroke had its power and effect, contributing to the depth and shades of the complete picture. Truly, "every little detail affects the whole." The old man once said, "Each stroke co-ordinates and compliments the others." All his life he regarded his work earnestly and was never flippant. He put his all into his creative efforts and strove to attain the highest level of artistic creation.

In general Chi Pai-shih painted from impressions without looking at real models, pictures or drafts. This was because through years of deep observation and artistic creation, he had accumulated enough impressions to reach the stage of having "the whole bamboo in his mind, the creative power in his hands." He said in his autobiography: "After I reached twenty, I discarded the hatchet to learn painting. I copied a thousand insects and a hundred birds. Only the dragon I dared not attempt, never having seen one." From this we know that he never painted from imagination but always started with real objects, whether in making a sketch or a portrait.

The world is particularly fond of Chi Pai-shih's prawns painted with a few simple strokes which bring to life on paper the contour, movement, feel and spirit of the creatures as well as the translucency of the water round them. Chi Pai-shih spent scores of years painting prawns. He used to keep two live prawns in the porcelain bowl which scholars use to wash their brushes. On one painting of prawns, he inscribed the following lines:

If I exchange my time for ways of art,  
Enough work will help me to achieve a likeness.  
Will I be wasting my time on fish and prawns,  
Unable to portray well what springs from water.

It wasn't until he entered his seventieth year that Chi Pai-shih's prawns reached the level of "likeness in both shape and spirit." He once said, "I have changed several times in painting prawns. At first my prawns bore only a slight resemblance to real ones. Then I made them look exactly like live ones. Later I again changed my method, using different shades of ink, which makes three phases altogether." The prawns painted by him in his eighties had a number of short feelers in addition to the six antennae on their heads. By the time he reached ninety he again omitted these short feelers.

He kept changing and improving the forms of his art all through the years. Once, during Spring Festival time, the writer Lao Sheh selected a line from a verse by the poet Su Man-ju, "The plantain leaves curl round autumn flowers," and asked him to do a painting. The old man pondered long over this line and could not remember how the plantain leaves

curled. As it was mid winter there was no real plantain to be seen, and he asked every one he met whether the plantain leaves curled from right to left or left to right. As he could not get an accurate answer he finally painted the picture without curling leaves.

In painting he always tempered his observation of real things with his own feelings and sentiments. All his life he opposed works which were mere imitations of actual objects, meant to cater to vulgar tastes. On the other hand he was equally opposed to the flippant pictures of scholars who "make rough sketches without any likeness to real things." He once inscribed on a painting: "The marvel of a good painting rests between likeness and no likeness. If it is an exact likeness it's catering to vulgar tastes, but no likeness is simply cheating."

In the world of Chinese painting, Chi Pai-shih is an unique figure, who blazed a broad trail for future artists. In the Tang, Five Dynasties and Sung dynasty, many outstanding painters appeared, and they wrote a glorious page in the history of Chinese painting. But after the Yuan dynasty, influenced by the negative attitude towards life of the scholar-official class, a tendency to imitate classical painting completely divorced from real life began to gain ground. Practically every painter since then found himself confronted with the dilemma of whether to "carry on traditions," or to "reflect reality." Chi Pai-shih was born at a time of decline and confusion in Chinese painting. Two schools stood diametrically opposed: the classicists dared not make a single stroke without referring to old masters; the reformists advocated breaking away from old rules and creating their own distinct style. Chi Pai-shih resolutely followed the latter and carried their ideas further. He greatly admired the reformist artists of the Ming and Ching dynasties such as Hsu Ching-teng, Shih Tao, Pa-ta-shan-jen, the painters of Yangchow during the Chien Lung and Chia Ching era and people like Wu Chang-shuo. One of his poems states:

Ching-teng and Hsueh-ko were no ordinary mortals,  
Wu Chang-shuo showed great talent in his later years,  
I would not have minded being their follower  
And calling at their doors.

Chi Pai-shih had deep respect for these former artists. Even though later on he surpassed them in artistic accomplishments, he never felt himself above them. However, he would not

let himself be restricted in any way by the works of former masters. He once told me a story: Many years ago his good friend, the artist Chen Shih-tseng, brought him a few of Wu Chang-shuo's albums from Japan. He leafed through them till late at night. The next day he found it difficult to paint as usual. He said, "I have lived in the country for scores of years and been out on five long trips; I have many things in my head to paint. But after looking at Wu's albums I feel restricted." In the end, he gave the albums to his son. He said, "Those among former painters who had the ability and courage to break away from the conventions of their predecessors and to set up their own schools need feel no shame or inferiority before the ancients."

Though he respected the traditions of classical painting, he was able to change his style continually. This required strong will power and perseverance. All his life, he never took the easy path or felt satisfied with what he had achieved. He kept searching and groping for new forms and conquering his shortcomings. After he reached middle age he left his solitary home village to travel widely in China and finally settled in the capital where he came into more contact with the traditions of classical painting. Then, he felt the necessity of altering his style. He wrote: "When I got a look at Huang Yin-piao's works, I realized that my paintings are still too close to the real things in shape but lack excellence of spirit. I decided to make a great change. If I should be condemned I will not listen and if I should be praised I will not be glad."

The paintings he did in his fifties, greatly influenced by the works of Pa-ta-shan-jen, were severe and cold. Then Chen Shih-tseng advised him to change his style. Though he was attached to the abstract style of painting he accepted his friend's advice and resolutely discarded it. This was quite an ordeal for him. He wrote of his sentiments then:

It is certainly hard to get rid of a vulgar style,  
At least ten years of work behind closed doors is needed.  
I persevere doggedly and do my best,  
How well I know the amount of time thus spent!

After the master died, I spent five days in the exhibition hall where his works were displayed. On the last day, I went on from there to the picture gallery in the Palace Museum to see again the works of past masters. This close comparison

made me feel sharply that Chi Pai-shih was an artist who belonged to our times. Inheriting the best from old traditions, his artistic creations are imbued with a strong contemporaneity. His paintings synthesize, without a blemish, the simple and wholesome feelings of the people with the fine techniques of classical art, thus blazing a new trail for Chinese painting.

In his later years Chi Pai-shih always let the visitors who came to him for pictures name the theme they wanted. Some of the subjects suggested would probably appear "too common" to most artists. Very often a villager would ask the old man for a painting on such a popular folk theme as "Wealth and Luck," or "Felicity." To this the old man would agree with a smile. These "common" themes invariably took on originality under his brush and a work of art, appreciated by both the connoisseur and the amateur, would be created.

Having started as a folk artist, Chi Pai-shih was able to absorb much from folk art in his choice of colour and themes. Former artists of the scholar-official class usually looked upon classical paintings as elegant and folk art as common; they felt that the two were incompatible. Chi Pai-shih, however, very naturally blended the wholesomeness and truthfulness characterizing folk art with his own style of painting. Not only did he break down the supposed incompatibility between what is elegant and what is common, he also enriched his creative conception.

It is now two years since Chi Pai-shih left the world. On my desk are the last words he wrote for me, "Diligence Makes Perfection." A picture of prawns painted by him in his nineties hangs on the wall. With his painting and calligraphy before me, I can conjure up his face and hear his voice. The master had left behind him tens of thousand of paintings, an almost inexhaustible treasure-house of art for posterity.

The poet Kuo Mo-jo epitomized his life with the following lines:

The centenarian enables a hundred flowers to blossom  
for ever,

A thousand voices affirm him immortal for a thousand  
years and more!

*Begonias* by Chi Pai-shih→



## Performances from Abroad

As I sit writing, Peking's summer is ending. We are entering the dry, clear, blue-skyed season—the beautiful Peking autumn. Still, I'm sorry summer has passed so quickly. In the artistic life of the people of the capital, it was a memorable time in many ways: Well-known dance and drama companies from various parts of the country came here to put on the best of their repertoire, culminating in a grand-scale festival; then the sixty-six years old famous actor Mei Lan-fang produced his new opera *Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command* for the first time in two decades. On top of this many fine performances from abroad added colour and brightness to the stages of Peking. It is about these exotic shows that I want to confine myself in this brief note.

The Fantasia Boliviana Song and Dance Troupe brought the charming music and dances of the Amazon Valley and the Andes Highlands to the capital in early summer. Let's have a look at the dance called *Marriage Ceremony on the Highlands*. To the accompaniment of the *zampona*, a bride and groom appear amidst neighbour girls, in pleated skirts and glittering hats, who have come to the wedding and who dance with their young men in great gaiety and merriment. Of course the newly-weds were the best dancers. The colourful costume and cheerful faces give us a picturesque reflection of the life in the highlands and the wholesome, happy state of mind of the people. *La Diablada*, a ritual dance, recalls the legends of the ancient Indians. Holding golden snakes in their hands, the dancers wear masks of primitive images and wrappers embroidered with golden and silver dragons. Then the angel Miguel appears wearing a hat with white tassels two feet long. He fights with the devils. In the end good triumphs over evil. The performance was bold, simple, but highly passionate and original. The talented dancer Graciela Urguidi de Ascarrunz, art adviser to the troupe, deserves whole-hearted praise for her efforts in making these dances thoroughly enjoyable as well as highly artistic.

The performance of the "Cebollita" instrumentalists roused particular interest among Chinese musicians, who found that the resonant *zampona* resembled an ancient Chinese musical instrument, the *paihsiao*. Was this *zampona* of Bolivia introduced from China, or vice versa? Of course this is a question to be solved by the future researchers in this field. But one thing is certain that in ancient times the people living on the banks of the Amazon River must have had similar artistic taste as those living in the Yellow River valley.

Next came the Indonesian dancers and musicians from Sumatra. They brought an entirely new set of music and dances, so expressive and national both in form and content, that I doubt if the Peking audience had ever seen anything of its kind before. The demure, good and quiet women they depicted in such detail were simply fascinating. Many movements in the *Gadis Tarana* danced by Heilda bear great resemblance to those in Chinese operas. The hands, eyes, head, shoulders, and waist of the dancer expressing the love and longing of a girl deserted by her lover are exquisite. *Tari Piring*, an ancient folk dance, depicts the emotional agitation



The "Cebollita" instrumentalists

Sketch by Yeh Chien-yu

of a young girl who has lost her engagement ring. The dance shows her eagerness, worry and embarrassment and the love she cherishes for her young man as she searches for it in the light of a candle. *Tari Tanggai* took us to the period of the Sriwidjaja monarchy when young girls put on long golden nails symbolizing dignity. Movements of the hands and kneeling and sitting cross-legged reflect the social customs of that time. *Mak Mang dan Bunga Rampai* enabled us to form an attractive picture of the present life of Sumatra: blue mountains in the distance; green fields and ancient wooden houses; girls in colourful skirts and young men in brown shirts and felt hats. They dance in pairs, in light and frolicsome mood, reminding one of the Chinese folk dance *yangko*. The *Sing Sing So* rendered by vocalist Gordon Tobing deserves special mention. His voice is rich and inspiring.

The Rumanian musicians led by the Merited Artist Yolanda Markulesku, earned distinction on the Peking stage with their lyrical Rumanian folk songs and their masterly interpretation of European music. Soprano Yolanda Markulesku's performance in particular expressed to the full the joyful spirit and optimism innate in the Rumanian folk melodies. Tenor Titus Mararu's rendering of Rumanian songs and



*Gadis Tarana* Sketch by Yeh Chien-yu

soprano Selma Loligar's interpretation of Schumann and Schubert were excellent. Young violinist Mihai Konstantinesku showed a deep understanding for Tartini, Khachaturyan and Dvorak.

If we say that these stage performances are fine poetry with a touch of romanticism, then the films from abroad should be regarded as elegant prose with strong realistic tendencies although they are by no means lacking in poetry. The documentary and feature films which made up the Iraqi Film Week are a case in point. They record the determined struggle of the Iraqi people for independence and freedom and take their audience to a land where an ancient culture is taking a new turn. The feature film *Neighbours* wittily castigates the dark



Con el guiso  
idionma de real-  
tado sobre proa  
expresan la emoción  
que despierta el  
pueblo. Quiere para  
aquello que venimos  
del fuera. 15/5/59  
Alejandro Galindo

No language can express  
my admiration for the  
Chinese people.

Alejandro Galindo

old society through the tale of  
a teacher and a shoemaker's  
families.

The three Mexican films, *Espaldas Mojadas*, *Rio Escondido* and *Las Abandonadas* which were shown to packed houses in nine famous Peking cinemas for a whole week are quite different in style but possess the same realism as the Iraqi films. Peking audiences were not unfamiliar with releases from Mexican studios. They saw and liked *Derecho de Nacer* and *Raices*, imported a few years ago. *Espaldas Mojadas* is the story of Campusano, who stealthily crosses the border to the United States, lured by lies of high wages. After meeting with many disasters, he had no other way out but to return to his own motherland. The film reminds one of a saying in Latin America: "As bad luck would have it, we are too far away from God and too near to the United States." In the *Rio*

*Escondido* we see a woman teacher Rosaura Salazar, an intellectual with ideals who goes to the countryside to set up a school and fight against the villainous village head. The artistic success of the film is in its camera work. The photographer has successfully made use of the best traditions of Mexican art. *Las Abandonadas* directed by Emilio Fernandez was a comparatively old film. The unfortunate fate of Margarita and her great love as a mother are very moving. Inspired by paintings of well-known Mexican painters, the director has created scenes which are delights to the eye. The major role is played by the well-known actress Dolores del Rio, whose superb acting has lent great charms to the film.

At the same time as these films were shown a delegation from the Mexican film circles arrived in China to meet with Chinese people who work in the same field. The personal appearance of the famous actor, Dr. Rodolfo Landa Echeverria, director Alejandro Galindo, noted author and scenarist Edmundo Baez and actress Mari Cruz Oliver before the Chinese public is not only a great event to Peking theatre-goers but also marks a step forward in the development of cultural exchanges between the peoples of Mexico and China.

## Chronicle

### New Films

Several new Chinese feature films will soon be released. *Long Live the Red Army*, adapted from the modern drama *The Long March* by the famous playwright Chen Chi-tung, tells the difficult and heroic experiences of the Red Army on the famous Long March. Its hero, Li Yu-kuo, political instructor, is portrayed by Lan Ma, a well-known actor. *Storm* depicts the February 7 Railway Workers' Strike. Through the courageous images of Shih Yang and Lin Hsiang-chien, who gave their lives for the revolution, it shows the heroism of the Chinese working class. *Song of Youth* is an adaptation of a novel about the awakening and struggle of the patriotic students of Peking in the period of 1931-35 against the government's policy of non-resistance towards foreign aggression on China. *Nieh Erh*, a feature film in colour, tells the story of this late talented composer. It was written by Nieh Erh's friends Yu Ling, Meng Po and Cheng Chun-li. The title role is played by the well-known actor Chao Tan, also one of his friends. *Precious Lotus Lantern*, a coloured film, is a fairy tale ballet about a nymph who married a mortal and is punished by her brother who imprisons her under a mountain. After many years her son opens up the mountain and saves her. The nymph is played by the young dancer Chao Ching. The coloured historical film *Lin Tse-hsu* has already been released. It depicts Lin's leadership of the Chinese people in their fight against the British imperialists who were importing opium to poison the Chinese people more than a hundred years ago.

### Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 Performed in Peking

In July, Beethoven's Ninth (Choral) Symphony was performed for the first time in Peking to a packed house by the Central Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, sup-

ported by the Central Radio Philharmonic Chorus, under the baton of the young conductor Yen Liang-kun. It was broadcast simultaneously over the radio. Lu Chi, chairman of the Union of Chinese Musicians, pointed out that this performance marks a big step forward by the Chinese musicians in their study of the best of Western music.

### More Ancient Relics Discovered

Recently, a number of ancient relics were unearthed in Hupeh and Szechuan Provinces along the upper reaches of Yangtse River. A Han dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220) tomb was discovered in the area of the Tanchiangkou Reservoir, Hupeh Province. In front of the tomb is a stone statue of a mounted figure beside a carved rectangular stone table. They were very life-like. From the manner of burial and the other articles unearthed it is estimated that this tomb dates about the end of the Eastern Han (A.D. 25-220).

Ninety-two sites dating from early Neolithic period to the Han dynasty were discovered in the area of the Tanchiangkou Reservoir. In the Nanyang area near the reservoir a copper smelting site of the Shang dynasty (c. 16th-11th century B.C.) and an ancient iron furnace were found.

In the area of the Yangtse Gorges in Szechuan Province more than ninety sites, some with tombs and stone carvings, were discovered. Several belong to the early Neolithic Ages. Sites of the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.) and the Chin (221-206 B.C.), Han, Tang (A.D. 618-907) and Sung (A.D. 960-1279) dynasties were also discovered.

### New Editions of Outstanding Dramas

The Chinese Drama Publishing House has published fourteen of the best dramas written since the May the Fourth Movement of 1919. They were carefully chosen from the works of our most distinguished playwrights Kuo Mo-jo, Tien Han, Ouyang Yu-chien, Yang Han-sheng, Hsia Yen, Tsao Yu and the late Hung Shen. They include Tsao Yu's *Thunderstorm*

and *Sunrise*, Kuo Mo-jo's *Chu Yuan* and *Tiger Tally*, Tien Han's *Death of an Actor*, and Hsia Yen's *Under the Eaves of Shanghai* — all old favourites of Chinese audiences.

### Memorial Halls for Sung Dynasty Poets and Writers

Su Tung-po, well-known poet of the Sung dynasty, was born in Meishan County in Southern Szechuan. He, his brother Su Che, and his father Su Hsun, were all outstanding men of letters and were known together as the Three Sus. A Temple of the Three Sus in the countyseat, repaired in the reign of Kang Hsi (A.D. 1662-1723) of the Ching dynasty, and its surrounding grounds, has recently been converted into a park. The temple has two stone monuments engraved with Su Tung-po's handwritings in 1086. It is planned to build a memorial hall for the Three Sus in the park grounds where mementoes and writings of the poet and his brother and father will be kept. Already thousands of volumes of different editions and collections of the Three Sus' works published in various dynasties and some abroad have been collected together with the rubbings of their calligraphies.

There is a Toper's Pavilion in Chuhsien County, Anhwei Province which gained fame when Ouyang Hsiu wrote an essay on it. Ouyang Hsiu was a distinguished prose writer and historian of the Sung dynasty. After liberation, the people's government had the pavilion repaired. Its name, said to have been written by Su Tung-po, was recarved on a new tablet. The pavilion contains rubbings of calligraphy, pictures, and portraits of Ouyang Hsiu, as well as pictures and writing by the outstanding calligrapher and painter of the Ching dynasty, Cheng Pan-chiao. At present the provincial cultural and education bureau is making preparations to set up an Ouyang Hsiu's memorial hall in the pavilion and is now collecting material. The hall will be opened on National Day this year.

### P.L.A. Festival

The second music and drama festival of the Chinese People's Liberation Army took place in June and July in Peking.

Thirty-seven units performed more than four hundred items including plays, ballets, classical and folk operas, dances and music.

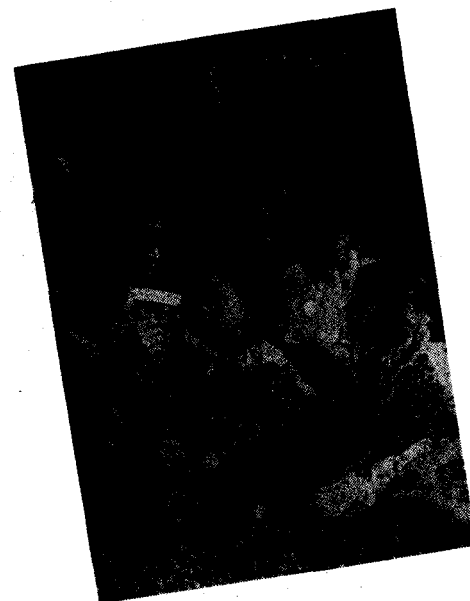
More than a hundred generals formed a Generals' Amateur Chorus. One of the many moving songs the grey-haired veterans sang was *I'm Just a Soldier*, which won hearty applause. *The Immortals*, a ballet based on a poem of the same title by Mao Tse-tung, is a new attempt. Though not entirely satisfactory, it has many moving and poetic scenes which possess great charms. *Red Clouds*, another ballet, is based on folk dances and songs. It tells how the Li people on Hainan Island rose in revolt against the Kuomintang oppression on the eve of liberation. The play *The Locust Tree Village* reflects life in the countryside after liberation. A colourful Tai dance, *Water Festival*, and folk songs of the Owenke people were also outstanding features of the festival.

### Classical Literature Republished

Chunghua Bookstore, which specializes in publishing classical books and reference material for literary research, plans to publish this year a number of classical and modern literary works in four categories.

1. Collections of classical literature. Chunghua has already published a collection called *Writings of the Hsia, Shang, Chou, Chin and Han Dynasties, the Three Kingdoms and the Six Dynasties* (c. two thousand years B.C. to the sixth century A.D.) and another collection entitled *Poems of Han Dynasty, the Three Kingdoms, and the Southern and Northern Dynasties* (c. the third century B.C. to the sixth century A.D.). Now the Bookstore is going to publish *Poems of the Tang Dynasty* (A.D. 618-907), *Tsu of the Sung Dynasty* (A.D. 960-1279), *Supplement to the Collection of Yuan Dynasty Dramas* (A.D. 1279-1368) and *Poems of the Ching Dynasty* (A.D. 1644-1911). *Supplement to the Collection of Yuan Dynasty Dramas* consists of sixty-two dramas of the Yuan and Ming (A.D. 1368-1644) dynasties not included in the *Collection of Yuan Dynasty Dramas*. *Poems of the Ching Dynasty* consists of poems which reflect the social, political and economic situation of that period. 2. Selections of literary works compiled by contemporary writers. These

will include two collections of modern literature by Ah Ying. One is *Anti-Aggression Writings of Modern China*. The other is *Literary Works of the Late Ching Dynasty*. The former, consisting of five volumes, will be published this year. The latter, consisting of ten volumes, will be published next year. 3. Writings by famous patriots. *Works of Tsao Tsao*, *Poems by Nieh Yi-chung and Tu Hsun-ho*, *Works of Hsia Wan-shun* and *Manuscripts of Kuei Chuang's Poems* will be published by the end of the year. 4. Simplified classical literature for popular reading. *A Selection of Stories from Historical Records*, *One Hundred Poems of the Tang Dynasty* and *Woman General Mu Kuei-ying* have already appeared. *A Selection of Ancient Folk Songs*, *One Hundred Poems of the Sung Dynasty* and *A Selection of Ancient Dramas* will be published soon.



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